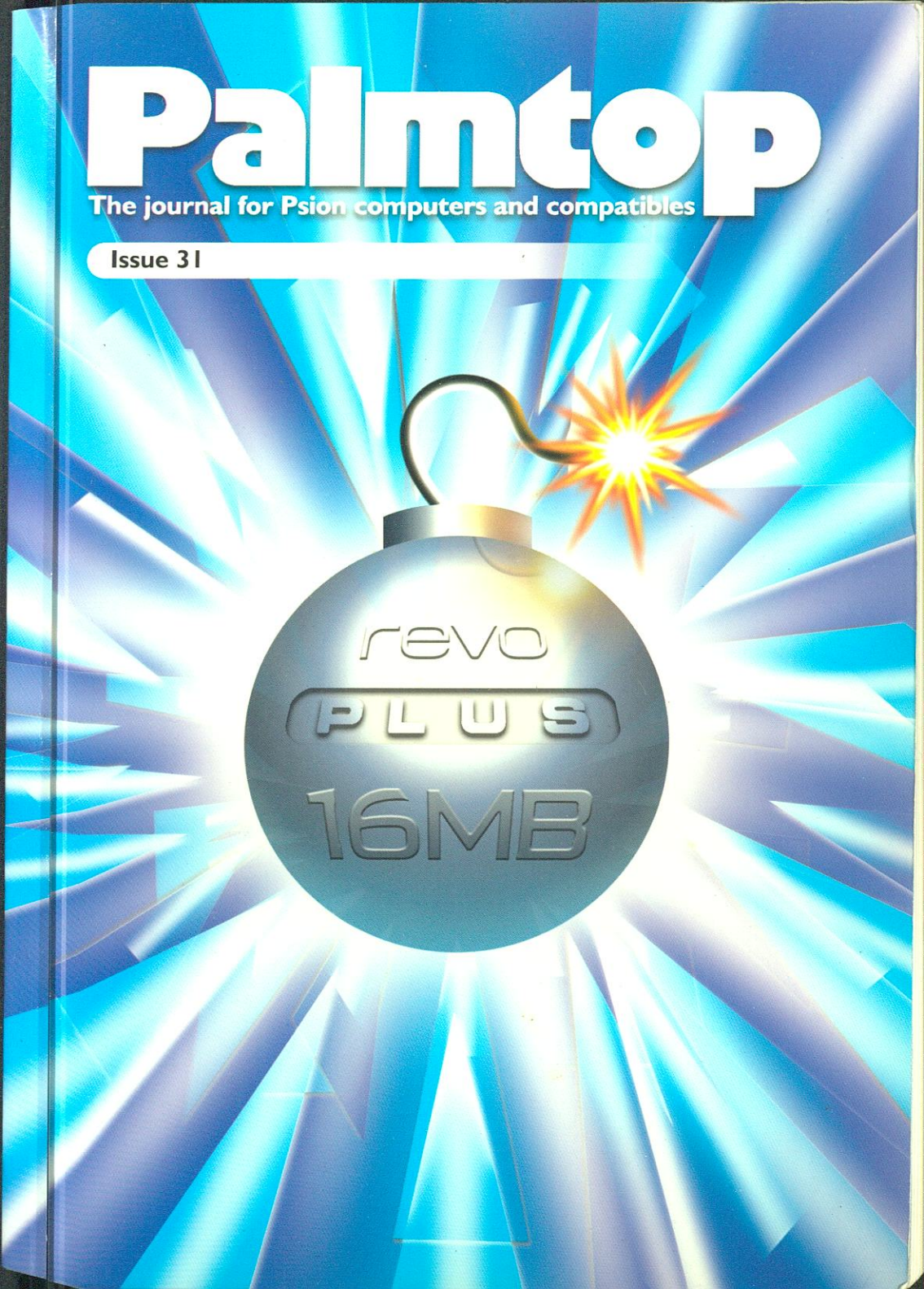
Palmtop

The journal for Psion computers and compatibles

Issue 31



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Docking Station for the 5mx/mc218
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visit our web site!!
www.clove.co.uk

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Allows the Series 5/mx/MC218 to be held at a good (adjustable) working angle for use in the car. It has a cut out for connection for a car mains unit (why not order both together) and GPS cables.

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Submissions

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Contents

Issue 31
(Volume 6, issue 1)

Features

Getting along with EpocSync A tour of this powerful new tool ... 47
Printing on the desktop Some pointers on choosing a printer 53
Get connected! Part two of our Internet connectivity series 57
Working for a living: the Manager 67
Genealogy on the go Using a Psion to help trace your family tree 72
Revo essentials Software indispensables for Psion's smallest palmtop ... 75
Working with Word The third part of this major tutorial series 81
Choosing a Psion Make your PC think it's a Psion 85

Regulars

Editorial The rise and rise of the Psion Revo 3
Newsreel A roundup of what's happening on the Psion scene 4
Industry News What's new in the non-EPOC sector 11
Shareware Shorts Highlights from the shareware world 12
A Closer Look The hottest new products on test 18
Competition WIN an 80MB CompactFlash disk 80
Worth a read Our new regular feature covering electronic books 91
Hot tips for hot games Hone your skills in 'Psi-Jong' 94
On The Net Pete Sipple's Internet roundup 96
Hints & Tips More priceless nuggets for your palmtop 98
Q&A Your questions answered 100
Musings Close encounters of the Palm kind 104

EDITORIAL

During recent months, Psion appear to have gone Revo crazy. It's no secret that Revo sales have far exceeded those of the Series 5 range, and that Psion have found themselves with something of an unexpected winner. Those who thought of it as a (relatively) low-cost option to mop-up sales in the £300 segment of the market have seen it become Psion's undisputed flagship model, at least in terms of sales volume.

For anyone looking at the broader picture in the PDA world, the success of the Revo is less of a revelation. With the no-frills Palm organiser and its Handspring Visor cousin topping world sales in the palmtop arena, it's evident that the average user wants little more than a stylish and pocketable address book and diary. The typical PDA user doesn't need to write a thesis or create multimedia presentations while on the move, they just want to keep themselves scheduled, informed and in touch.

Clever as pen-based organisers are, a reasonable quality keyboard is still essential for any amount of data entry, and the Revo provides exactly that. It's agony if you want to write a 5,000 word report, but ideal for quick jottings, short correspondence, emails, SMS messages and those small-but-handy spreadsheets.

Armed with a half-decent keyboard, reasonable screen (in daylight, at least) and an exceptionally powerful but easy-to-learn suite of built-in applications, the Revo meets the average PDA user's needs with aplomb.

With the introduction of the new 16MB WAP-and-web-enabled Revo Plus, there's now enough room to grow for those who find themselves delving into the world of add-on software. As the Revo range gradually bolts on most of the functionality of its Series 5 sibling, It'll be interesting to see where the long-term future of the Series 5 range lies.

Steve Clack - October 2000

Palmtop is...

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Thanks... to all the other contributors whose names appear within *Palmtop* and those who have kindly supplied products for evaluation.

EPOC cartoons - Carl Reader

Printed by

NEWSREEL

What's new in the world of EPOC

Revo Plus launched

Psion Computers have launched a 16MB version of the Revo, dubbed the Revo Plus. It also comes with pre-registered versions of the Opera and WAP browsers on CD. See page 21 for a full review.

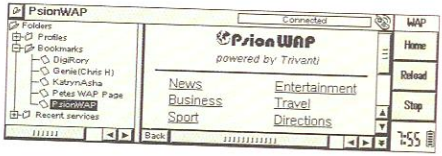
www.psion.com/revoplus

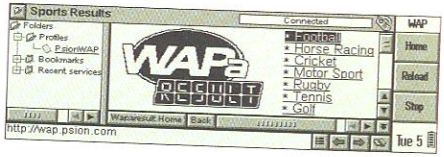
revo PLUS™

PsionWAP portal

Trivanti, the joint venture between Psion and United News and Media, have unveiled a new WAP service that has been specifically developed for use with the WAP browser on the new Revo Plus, but which also work with any other WAP device. The new service, PsionWAP, brings together content from industry leaders in fields such as entertainment, finance, games and travel.

www.trivanti.com/PsionWAP.htm





Sanyo licenses Symbian technology

Sanyo have now joined Ericsson, Matsushita, Motorola, Nokia, Psion, Philips and Sony as licensees of Symbian's EPOC technology. Sanyo "intends to develop a range of advanced mobile communication devices based on the Symbian software platform, designed to tightly integrate cellular phone functionality with mobile computing".

www.symbian.com

One month free

Following widespread criticism of its recent telephone support charges (see issue 26, page 4 for details), Psion have finally made a small concession. By registering online at *www.psion.com/register* , all new owners are now entitled to one month's free technical support.

For those who want free help after the month has elapsed, note Psion's technical support web site, which contains a wide range of solutions to common problems, as well as an email form to request further support.

www.psion.com/support

Psion commits to faster modem standard

Psion Connect has become the world's first PC Card manufacturer to commit to the recently announced V.92 standard. Psion Connect should be incorporating this across its entire range by early next year.

V.92 has significant advantages over the current V.90 standard and moves analogue modems nearer to digital speeds and capabilities. Users of the new modems will notice several differences. Current connection startup times of around 30 seconds can be reduced by up to 70% because of quicker modem handshake time. An extra feature known as 'Modem On Hold' (MOH) allows users to stay connected to the Internet while making or taking a telephone call, saving the need for an extra phone line.

www.psion.com

Macintosh connectivity due

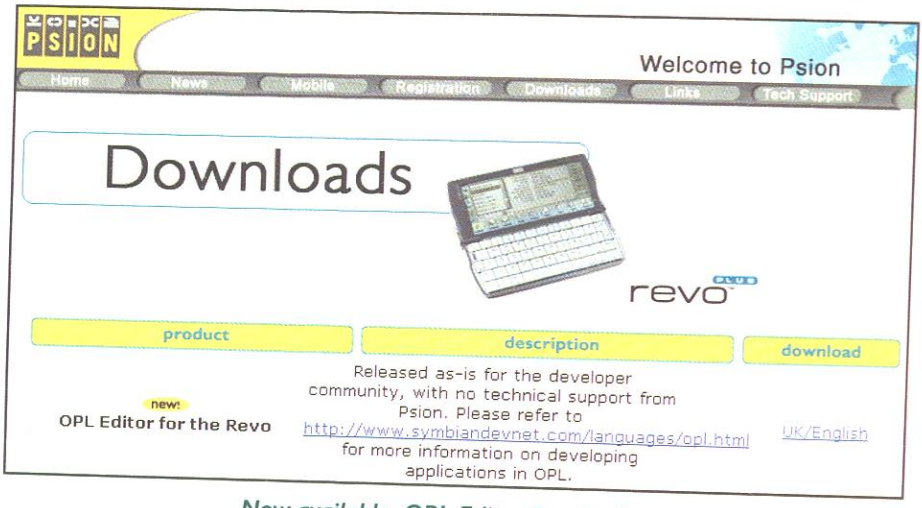
A new Apple Macintosh connectivity suite is slated for release in the first quarter of next year. This replacement for the lacklustre MacConnect is planned to include direct synchronization with Mac-based PIMs and full conversion between Psion and Macintosh file formats.

New PsiWin due soon

Psion have informally announced that a new version of PsiWin will be launched in November. Significantly, it seems that any licensing issues have been resolved, as the new software is likely to be made available as a free download. In view of the large file sizes involved, Psion will also be working to include PsiWin on magazine cover CDs, including the Palmtop CD.

Programming on the Revo

Psion have now released the 'missing' OPL program editor for the Revo and Revo Plus. Originally omitted to avoid making new customers fearful that programming knowledge was actually *required* in order to use the unit, it can be downloaded for free.



Now available, OPL Editor for the Revo

OPL is the BASIC-like programming language that has traditionally shipped with every other Psion palmtop in the last ten years. It forms the basis of the vast majority of third party applications.

www.psion.com/downloads

No signs of giant storage

There's still no sign of the promised Halo Data microdrive, which will fit in a Type I CompactFlash slot, as featured on the Series 5 range. There's also no sign (yet) of IBM's new 1GB microdrive, and so we've reluctantly had to delay our look at high capacity storage solutions. We'll be running this in-depth article as soon as the required hardware becomes available.

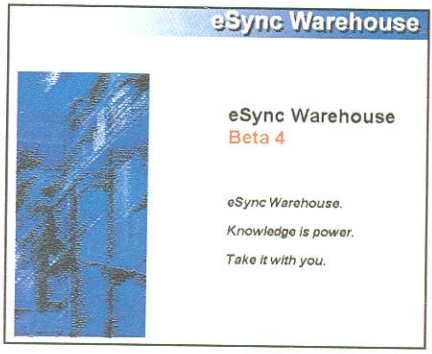
www.halodata.com
www.ibm.com

EPOC is dead, long live Symbian!

Symbian have released the latest version of EPOC to their licensees, for integration into around 20 new smartphones and communicators already in development, but the operating system is now referred to as 'the Symbian platform' rather than 'EPOC', better reflecting the identity of its creator and also the fact that it's not a specific, locked down operating system but a range of kernels, systems and applications that can be customised as needed by each licensee.

Note: we'll continue to use the term 'EPOC' where appropriate in Palmtop, to describe the software in the current Psion range.

Psion, along with Ericsson, Nokia, Panasonic, Motorola and Sanyo, are all developing Symbian communicators (some with, some without keyboards). Ericsson, Nokia, Panasonic and Sony are all developing Symbian smartphones.



Version 6.0 of the Symbian platform

Fully integrating data and voice into wireless products, version 6.0 of the Symbian platform includes direct support for WAP 1.1, HTML, Bluetooth and wireless Java. Symbian will add support for packet data on GSM networks (GPRS), enhanced Bluetooth and WAP 1.2 functionality in Symbian platform version 6.1, scheduled for release to licensees by the end of this year.

See Symbian's advertisement on page 138 for more details on the Symbian Developer Expo in London on 6-7th November.

www.symbian.com

Psion partner with S3

Psion Computers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with S3 Incorporated, a leader in digital consumer devices, to pursue both immediate and longer term opportunities in emerging communications and computing markets. The companies have agreed to examine a range of opportunities including technology cross-licensing and joint product marketing.

www.S3.com
www.psion.com

Email warehouse

eSync Warehouse is a new email archiving/research tool for users of EPOC palmtops. It allows users to transfer email from any folders in their desktop email system to either a Data file or the ER5 Email application via a serial cable. It complements and enhances the standard EPOC Connect (PsiWin) email synchronization by allowing users to create potentially large 'warehouses' of email on their devices which they can search and manage while disconnected.

eSync Warehouse is currently in beta testing, and is available for Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes and Novell GroupWise. The free beta version is available from:

www.advansyscorp.com/eswbeta.htm

Deskjet printing fix

Anyone who's experienced overprinting and slow print speeds when printing directly to HP Deskjet or Laserjet printers should note that there's now a free third party replacement driver. It works with all PCL printers, such as the DeskJet 340 and 660C.

www.aps.anl.gov/~anj/pcl5

Purple Software's next move

Purple Software have showcased Java versions of their games for wireless devices at the most prestigious conference and exposition for the wireless and computing indus-

Revo accessorized

At the recent Revo Plus launch, Psion Computers announced a number of new accessories:

USB connectivity for Mac and PC

The USB (Universal Serial Bus) connectivity pack allows connection of a Revo to the USB port of any compatible Windows PC or Macintosh computer, for data transfer and synchronization. Price is expected to be £60, available from November.

Revo Travel Docking Station

Much smaller than the normal docking station, the Travel Docking Station (shown below) clips to the bottom of the Revo when open, enabling connection to the serial port of a PC or laptop. Price will be £30, available from November.

Universal Travel Adaptor

For international business travellers, this is a multi-voltage, multi-pin power supply for use in most areas of the world. Price will be £30, also available in November.

Docking Pack

Useful if you use more than one PC, for example one at work and another at home, a spare docking station and power supply allows backup and transfer of information at both locations. Price will be £35, available now.

Psion in-car charger

This allows the Revo to be charged directly from a car cigarette lighter socket. Price is £30, available now.

Gold Card Charge Link

This removes the need for heavy and bulky mains charger units for mobile devices. The lightweight cable simply plugs into the Gold Card Global or Gold Card NetGlobal range of PC Cards to provide power to recharge the Revo's batteries.

Infrared Printer Pod

For the convenience of printing from the Revo without the need to connect through a PC, the Infrared Printer Pod connects to any standard parallel port, making virtually any printer infrared-enabled. Price is £50, available now.

Carrying case

This is a small, durable carry case in blue. Price is £20 and available now.

Pen pack

A pack of three additional styli for use with the Revo and Revo Plus. Price will be £10, available now.

tries, PCIA Global XChange (2000). The games, based on classic strategy and board games such as Chess, Backgammon, Bridge and Checkers, are designed to provide wireless device users with the ability to play classic games over infrared, Bluetooth, email, WAP, SMS and GPRS.

www.purplesoft.com

Quartz on display

At the same show (PCIA Global Xchange), Symbian showed the world live web and WAP connectivity for the first time, using the Quartz platform (featured in detail in issue 29). They used both emulators and Ericsson's concept hardware for the demonstrations. Also on the stand were additional prototypes of Quartz devices.

The first Quartz-based device is now not expected to be available commercially until the middle of next year.

www.symbian.com/PCIA

Top Symbian executive joins rivals

Juha Christensen, formerly an Executive Vice President and key member of the management team at Symbian, has left to take up a position at Microsoft. He served as Symbian's spokesperson and led sales and marketing efforts for their licensing programme worldwide. Christensen will now perform a similar role for Microsoft's Mobility Group.

Travel modem price slashed

At the time of going to press, reports of a new RRP for the Psion 56k Infrared Travel Modem were beginning to appear. Some distributors are already quoting prices of £100 including VAT. The modem now also features updated firmware from that covered in our review in issue 27 of Palmtop. We'll be re-testing the modem in the next issue.

WAP Browser now available

Bundled with the Revo Plus, the Psion WAP Browser (reviewed in issue 30) is now available for electronic download for the Revo and Series 5mx users. Available in English, French and German versions, it can be downloaded via Braindock for $29.95.

www.psion.com/wap

INDUSTRY NEWS

In this regular feature we devote a single page to what's happening in the non-EPOC sector of mobile computing...

NEC has just released two new Handheld PC Pro devices. The MobilePro 880 is an updated version of the MobilePro 800, which was introduced over a year ago. The device comes with a 92% full-size keyboard, 168MHz processor, SVGA colour display and Windows CE v2.12, but with the Handheld PC Professional Edition v3.01 set of applications. The main drawback of the device is its size—its dimensions are similar to a notebook computer. The Mobile Pro 780 is almost identical to the 880, except that it has a smaller (½VGA) display and lacks a USB port. It is also more portable—only 60% of the size and weight of the 880. The MobilePro 880 retails in the region of $1000 and the 780 for about $850.

Intermec has unveiled a new Pocket PC due for release early next year. Designed specifically for industrial use, the rugged 700 Handheld Computer has Bluetooth wireless capabilities and includes the ability to check in-store stock in the retail industry. Weighing in at about 500g, the 700 is powered by a 206MHz processor and has 32MB of RAM and a CompactFlash slot as standard.

Compaq are to increase production of its new Pocket PC, the iPAQ. Demand has led to the units becoming unavailable recently. Compaq's CEO has reported that the company will increase production from the current 25,000 units per month to 50,000 units per month by December and 100,000 units per month by the beginning of January next year.

Targus have produced an external keyboard for the Jornada range of Pocket PCs. The Stowaway Portable Keyboard is a full-size keyboard that connects to the bottom of the device. Its most notable feature is that it folds to about the same size as the Jornada itself, to enable easy transportation.

Finally, Handspring have released details of a new $449 16-bit colour model of their Visor Palm OS clone, a faster, 30MHz mono organiser, and a new Springboard module. The plug-in VisorPhone module will provide the Visor user with everything necessary to send and receive data and voice over GSM networks. The module will retail for $299 and will be sold only from the Handspring web site.

Andy Nott

Shareware Shorts

Steve Litchfield, maintainer of the 3-Lib shareware library, takes a look at the latest additions to the world of Psion shareware...

After so many years in the world of Psion programming, I'm naturally disappointed when I come across otherwise good software that has been let down by one aspect of its design or implementation. A particular bugbear of mine in recent months has been the sin of over-complication...

So you've just loaded application X. You start it up, itching to enter your first bit of information. Eventually you find a menu command marked 'New gadget' and a fearsome dialog opens up. Bracing yourself for some typing, you fill in as many of the various fields as you can and tap on 'OK'. Another dialog appears, with '(2)' after the title—and another half dozen fields to fill in. Eventually something appears on screen, which is encouraging. But somehow you feel a bit embarrassed by all the fields you left blank or set to 'None', and you decide to explore the program further to see if they were important.

And it's at this point that the full horrors of over-complication become apparent, as you spot menu cards dedicated to entering, editing and deleting priorities, filters, categories, groups, workbooks and projects. All of which may work for a well-practised individual with plenty of time on their hands, working on a large-monitored desktop computer. But surely things should be kept as simple as possible on a palmtop, with all operations optimised for quick entry in as few keystrokes as possible? Finer detail should usually be filled in later on, when time permits and the inclination takes you.

Simple is usually best

Designing palmtop applications in this way is not easy. It's taken Psion a decade or so to get it right for their core programs, with a good compromise between power and accessibility in EPOC Release 5, as used on current models. Another confirmation that sometimes 'simple is best' is the success of rival Palm OS organisers, with applications that at first sight seem under-featured and over-restricted yet are often capable of performing the same functions when you willingly delve further.

When looking for a solution to a particular computing need, always go for the simplest

Business Warrior, aiming to be the ultimate business tool?

solution that will do the job. Functionality for its own sake will ultimately make for a longer learning curve, a greater risk of losing your way and (above all) wasted time—the cardinal sin for a mobile computer that's supposed to *save* time.

And so to recent shareware releases. Note that from this issue, if a program doesn't mention any specific hardware requirements then you can safely assume that it runs on any EPOC palmtop, regardless of size.

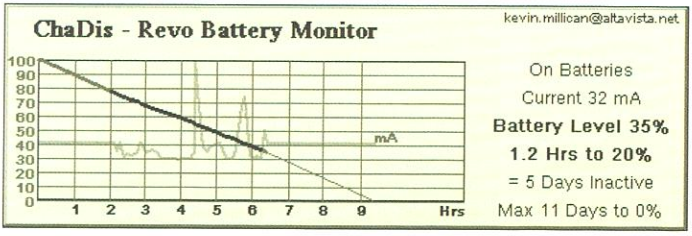
Business Warrior

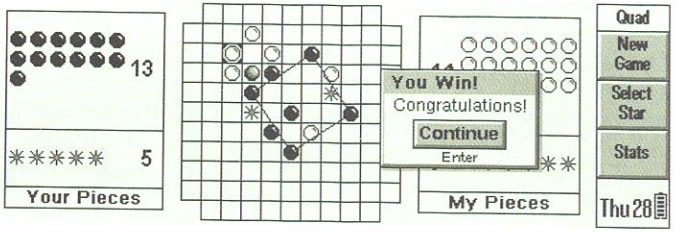
Although sometimes tending to fall foul of my dogma above, **Eric Sebban**'s new version of his sales and tracking tool is a potentially impressive piece of work. Totally rewritten in C++, it's very slick and very fast, looking to all the world like one of the built-in applications. Business Warrior is designed for the salesperson, manager or marketing executive and integrates itself into your ER5 palmtop's Contacts, Agenda and Email. For each company, you can build up multiple contacts, with detailed logging for sales opportunities, projects discussed, things-to-do and revenue earned. *www.pocketiq.com*

ChaDis

Following a number of negative comments on the Internet about the Revo's charging system (referred to on page 26), **Kevin Millican** has come up with a way to monitor your palmtop's battery behaviour. ChaDis runs in the background and logs the voltage of your Revo's rechargeable batteries, producing a graphical report. Initially this is based on default figures for realistic use, but shaded plots then build up a picture of recent usage characteristics and allow you to assess the best time to recharge it based on the way you use it and the real condition of the batteries. There are a few caveats to the utility, outlined in its good documentation. *www.kevin.millican.net*

ChaDis helping to make the most of your Revo's NiMh batteries





Don't be square—try Quad today!

Quad

Billed as having 'the complexity of Chess' and 'the simplicity of Noughts and Crosses', Quad has quite a lot to live up to. It's a conversion by **FreEPOC** of a classic strategy game designed in 1979. The goal then was to develop a quick-to-play but complex game with fewer rules than 'Go'.

The aim of Quad is simple. You have to make (at any angle or size) the four corners of a perfect square (a quad) with your attacking marbles, while at the same time stopping your opponent from doing the same. To help out, you each have six blocking stars, which you can play on any turn. These stop your opponent finishing a quad, but they also block your own attempts. One of Quad's outstanding features is a special tutorial mode to help you learn the game. *www.freepoc.de*

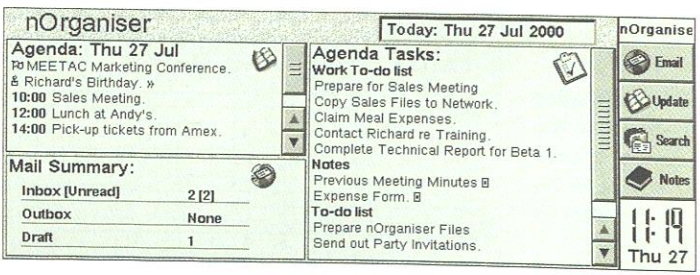
nOrganiser

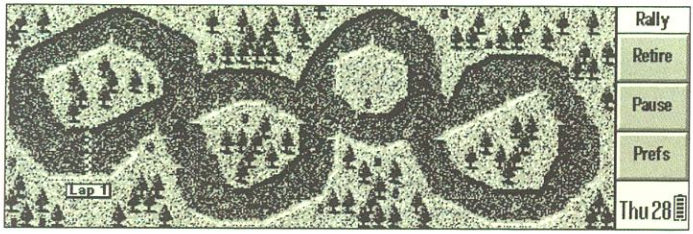
Neuon have been their usual prolific selves recently, the highlight perhaps being nOrganiser, a 'Today' view for the Series 5mx similar to that in the Psion Revo and Windows CE palmtops. Optionally popping up when you power the computer on, it shows a combined view for Agenda To-do items, your Email Inbox and Outboxes and Agenda's appointments for the current day. In addition to this useful overview, it also helps with other day-to-day organisational functions. *www.neuon.com*

Rally

Also from Neuon, Rally is a 'top-down' car racing game, along the lines of the old 'Micro Machines' PC classic. Three difficulty levels see you racing against your own slowest or fastest times, represented on screen by 'ghost' cars moving around the track at the same time. A fully featured map editor

nOrganiser brings the Revo's Today view to the Series 5mx





Whoops, about to crash again, in Rally

allows you to design tracks that can be shared easily with others. *www.neuon.com*

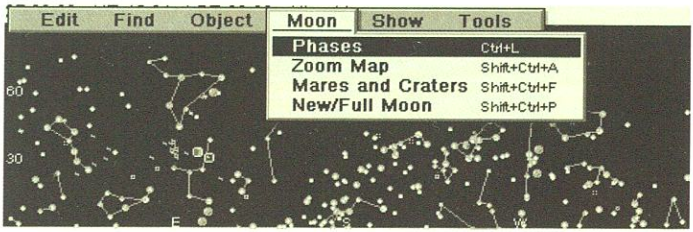
ProcyonR

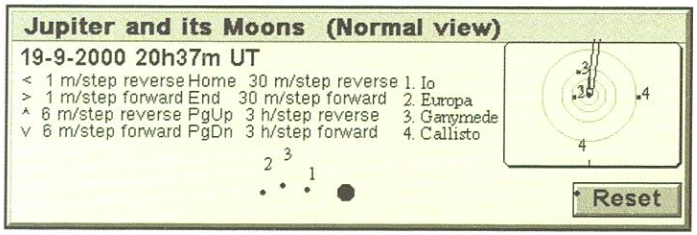
John Sussenbach's planetarium opus, Procyon, has now been ported to the Revo, with a specific version for the smaller screen. As on the Series 5mx, it includes not only star charts, comets, nebulae and other distant objects but also detailed information on our Solar System's moons, with occasional photos to illustrate important features. *www.sussenbach.myweb.nl*

Recycle Bin

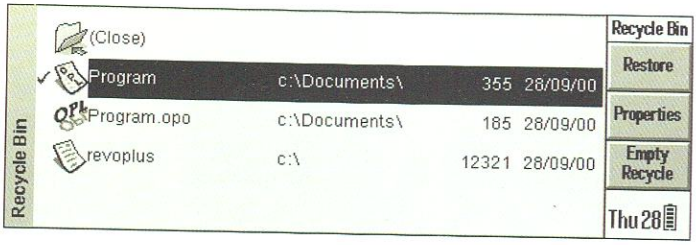
Here's something many people have been asking for since the Series 5 first came out—a fully integrated recycle bin (*a la* Windows) for deleted files. Programmed by **EPOCWare** (also known as Paragon Software, a name you'll remember from the Revo version of Sketch), this utility intercepts any file deletions from the System screen, moving the file instead into a special hidden area. A Recycle Bin icon on the System screen and another on the Extras bar both lead to the view shown on the next page, where you can select and restore any files that have been deleted by mistake.

Procyon's universal appeal





Become an astronomical expert with Procyon



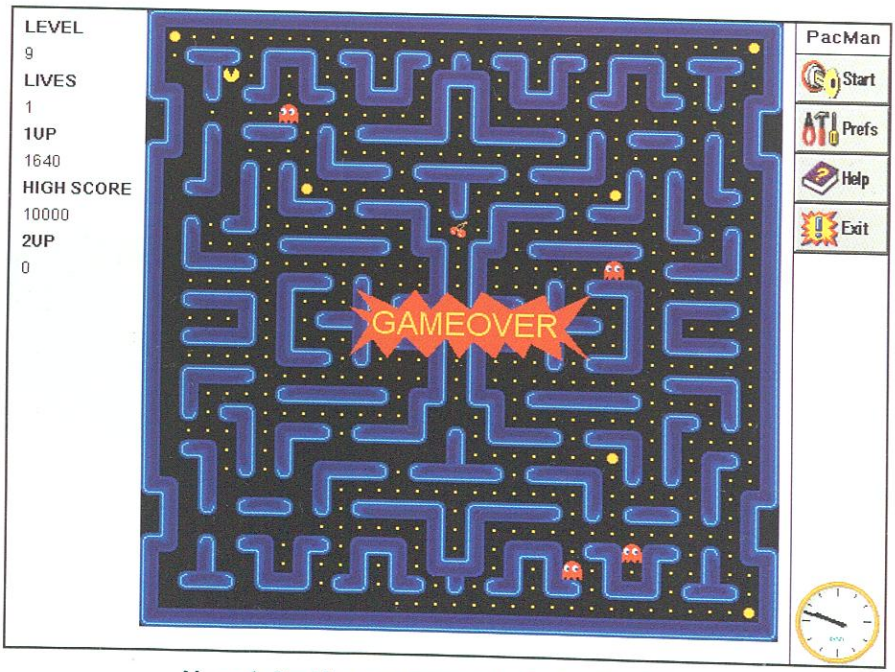
At long last, a proper recycle bin for EPOC

There are a few limitations unfortunately, but then this is still only version 1.0: it doesn't work on the Ericsson MC 218, it only protects files on the internal (C) disk and it can't protect files in the '\System' folder. It's still a ground-breaking utility though. *www.epocware.com*

PacMan

A number of games are now being created to take full advantage of the large colour screen of the Psion Series 7 and netBook. Perhaps the most universally appealing of these is PacMan, again from **Neuon**.

In an accurate portrayal of the classic arcade game, your little chomping character must be guided around the maze, eating



Neuon's PacMan running on the Series 7/netBook

RMRBank

FEATURED UPDATE!

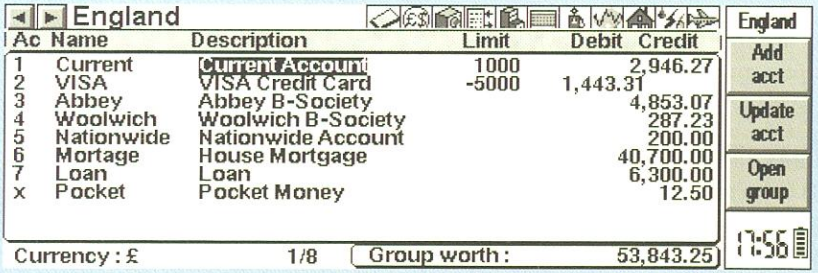
Perhaps the most updated (now at version 3.0c) and most registered shareware application of them all, RMRBank is a colossus. If you simply want a utility to track your spending in one bank account then this is far more than you need. But for anyone trying to construct a financial model of their life, complete with savings, accounts, investments, expenses and assets, RMRBank is the perfect tool. You'll need the best part of a megabyte to install it, but it's a wonderfully mature family of programs that has stood the test of time.

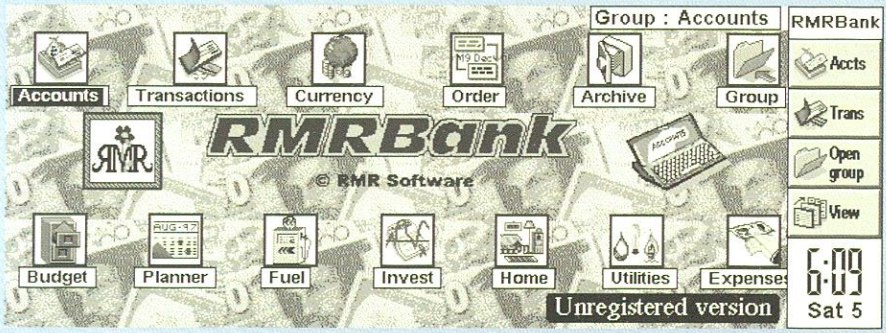
The last few versions have seen:

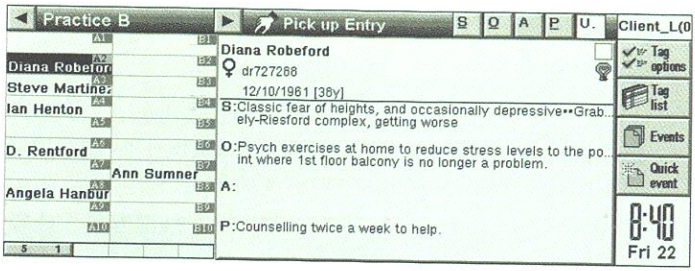
- Professional packaging of all language variants in a single SIS installation file.
- Redesign of all screens to suit and support the large, colour screen of the Series 7 and netBook.
- A currency convertor utility added to every screen.
- Use of multi-page dialogs, making the program more like the built-in EPOC applications.
- The addition of a detailed and polished PDF (Adobe Acrobat) manual.

As a small footnote to anyone who doubts that OPL is worth using for 'serious' programs, note that RMRBank is 100 percent written in OPL.

www.rmrsoft.com







Following through 'client' history in Client_L

all the 'dots', 'super dots' and fruit while avoiding the pursuing ghosts. The animation is rather simplistic, with the characters moving square-by-square rather than pixel-by-pixel, but it's fun to play and looks good in colour. Versions are also available for other EPOC computers. *www.neuon.com*

RMR Revertris

What do you get if you take the classic Tetris arcade game into another dimension? **RMR Software**'s Revertris is the answer, in which you are given a board area (varying in shape from level to level) into which you have to fit in the shapes available on the left of the screen. As with other 'killer' games, the presence of a timer ticking away has the desired effect of whipping up playing instincts into a panicked frenzy. RMR Revertris features polished graphics and nice musical sound effects. *www.rmrsoft.com*

Client_L

Programmed by **Shane McKee** originally as WardFive, a doctor-patient management system, this has now been reworked and relaunched with a view to use in other related fields—hence the more generic name (speak it aloud to get the witty point). Organising your clients (patients) into slots (beds) in categories (wards), you then have several note fields for analysis (diagnosis) and actions (treatment). As you'll gather from the parentheses, Client_L never strays far from the medical metaphor and is still ideally suited to a related discipline (e.g. psychiatry, geriatric care—even teaching) A sophisticated tagging system helps organise your patients and there are good import and export facilities. *www.palmaris.com*

Shareware availability

Please note that, by definition, many of the latest items featured in Shareware Shorts will *not* appear on existing Palmtop CDs, but on subsequent pressings of the disk. If you wish to receive every edition of the CD then see page 140 for details. To find the latest version of the programs mentioned here, go to the relevant author's web site as given in the text.

As mentioned elsewhere in the article, the vast majority of EPOC applications mentioned in Shareware Shorts run properly on the Psion Series 7, Series 5/5mx, Revo and compatibles, unless otherwise stated. If a program misbehaves on *your* EPOC computer, check the author's web site first and then email them if necessary.

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts to meet specific (and sometimes unusual) needs, shareware is often supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software you are then asked to send a payment to the author. Some programs are freeware and don't require any payment at all. Each program comes complete with information about how to install and use it, and how to pay for it.

Where can I find it?

One way to get any of these programs is from the Internet. If you've got access to the web there are several on-line indices which link directly to the relevant author download page concerned.

Things are actually even easier if you haven't got Internet access. As long as the program concerned has been out for a month or so, you should find a copy on the latest edition of the Palmtop CD-ROM, indexed into the appropriate category.

How do I use it?

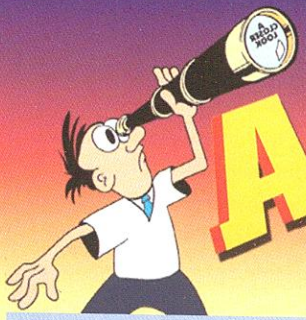
Once you've found the file you want, there are three steps you may need to take:

1. Decompress the files if necessary. If you're new to computers you may not be familiar with compression. Psion applications normally have more than one component (e.g. the program itself, help files and pictures). These are normally compressed into one file, which makes them easier to distribute. Shareware on the Internet is most commonly compressed in 'Zip' format, and you can recognise these by the '.ZIP' at the end of the filename. Before you can install and run the program you need to extract these files with an 'unzip' program, which is freely available from your shareware supplier. If you use DOS, look for PKUNZIP, Windows users can use Winzip, and Mac users should try ZipIt or the commercial Stuffit Deluxe. You can also unzip files on your Psion without using another computer, using RMRZip, from www.rmrsoft.com - see page 39 of issue 30.

2. Copy the files. You'll probably now need to transfer the unzipped files onto your Psion. To do this you'll need some external hardware, such as the PsiWin or EPOC Connect link cable. Normally one of the unzipped software files is a text file (e.g. README.TXT), which can be read by any word processor. It explains how the program should be installed and where the files need to be copied to on your Psion. Look out for any special SIS files, which can be double-clicked on for really easy installation.

   See 'The Installation Game' in issues 14/15 and 'Installing software - the easy way' in issue 21 for a more comprehensive discussion of the above procedures.

3. The newly installed program will automatically appear on the Extras bar. Press the 'Extras' application icon to check and to launch the software.



A Closer Look

...at some of the newest and most interesting products for your palmtop

Star Ratings:

★★★★★	Excellent
★★★★☆	Good
★★★☆☆	Average
★★☆☆☆	Fair
★☆☆☆☆	Poor
☆☆☆☆☆	Dismal

Interpreting reviews

Quality: the *Quality* star rating reflects how well the product works, whether it includes all the features you'd expect, whether the interface is consistent and easy to use, and in data-based software products it also reflects the quality of the information contained in the program.

Value: the *Value* star rating reflects the value for money of the product, taken within the context of what the program (or other product) does. Therefore a simple utility program will be rated differently to a sophisticated application at the same price.

Does it work on my palmtop?

Items reviewed should work with the Psion Revo and Revo Plus, Series 5/5mx, Series 7/netBook and Ericsson MC218 unless otherwise specified, though some programs may not currently support colour or utilise the full screen size of the Series 7 and netBook.

Programs *may* run on the Oregon Scientific Osaris, though part of the display may be clipped due to the Osaris' smaller 320x200 pixel screen. Osaris users should always consult the program developer before purchasing.

Revo Plus 21

VGASuite/Colorgraphics VGA 29

Harden's London Restaurants 2000 32

S5mboles 35

nConvert 38

Ericsson R380 40

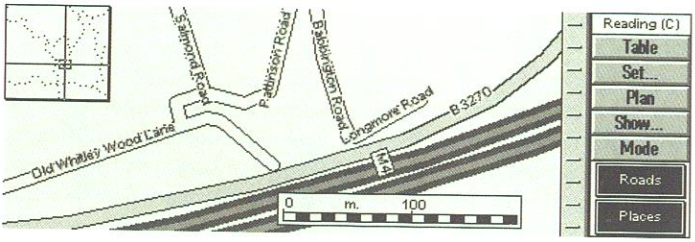
Revo Plus

Almost a year on from the original Revo launch, Psion have relaunched and repositioned it with a new 'Plus' appended to the name, a single hardware improvement and a number of software add-ons. Interestingly, almost all of these are also available for owners of the original Revo, albeit at some cost, though this should take nothing away from the Revo Plus package, which is quite impressive when taken as a fully-installed whole. In the intervening months, Psion have taken on board some criticisms of the Revo and have managed to address most of them.

A different league

At first glance, the inclusion of 16MB of memory (the original Revo had 8MB) seems like a trivial numeric increase. But consider what can now be installed. Of the original 8MB, at least 3-4MB are realistically needed for the running EPOC operating system and as working memory for built-in and third party applications. Allocate another megabyte for your own documents (Contacts, Agenda, spreadsheets, etc.) and you'd have found that there's only then room to install a handful of third party programs. For many Revo owners this may not be a problem, using the palmtop out of the box without adding anything to it. But anyone with a knowledge of the Psion world will be looking to use their palmtop for an awful lot more than simple Personal Information Management (PIM) tasks.

16MB is enough (just) to take the Revo Plus into a different league. Even after installing all the extras on the supplied CD and allowing for working memory and user documents, there's still over 8MB left for additional third party applications or storage. Room for a 'killer' application such as



Street Planner Millennium running on the Revo Plus

PalmTop Software's Street Planner Millennium (reviewed in issue 27), perhaps loaded with London and a handful of other cities, plus a few good games, the optional Spell Checker/Thesaurus and a few utilities.

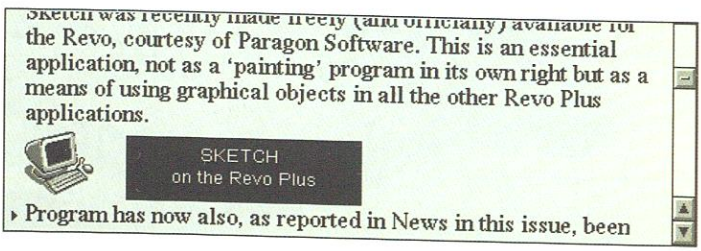
One of the main selling points of the Series 5/5mx's CompactFlash slot was the increased storage space it provided. Yes, some people swapped multiple CF disks around, but the vast majority of owners simply bought one largish disk and left it *in situ*. And so, in answer to the complaint that the Revo didn't have a CF slot, Psion must have argued why not simply put more memory into the palmtop in the first place? Admittedly, I'd have liked to have seen 32MB on board rather than 16, but then the cost of the memory chips starts to have an impact on the overall price, and at least this is a step in the right direction.

Filling in the gaps

Another criticism levelled at the original Revo was the absence of a number of EPOC staples that were present on the Series 5 range, notably Sketch and Program. As reported in our Newsreel section in issues 29 and 30, Sketch was recently made freely (and officially) available for the Revo, courtesy of Paragon Software. This is an essential application, not just as a 'painting' program in its own right but as a means of incorporating simple graphical objects in all the other Revo Plus applications.

Program has now also, as reported in this issue's Newsreel, been made available for the Revo as a free download, this time by Psion themselves. Having a means of writing small OPL programs on the palmtop itself was one of the main reasons why Psions grew so popular in the first place, and although of no interest to 99 percent of end users, it's good to see the application back where it belongs. It remains to be seen whether Psion will 'officially' include both applications on future Revo Plus CDs, but at least they're readily available on the Internet if needed. As with the memory increase, the availability of these two core

Embedded Sketch objects in Word, Data and Agenda are now a reality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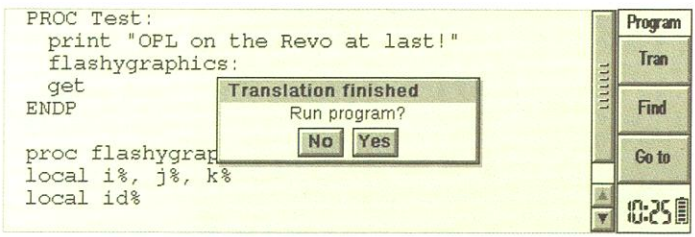
application, not as a 'painting' program in its own right but as a
means of using graphical objects in all the other Revo Plus
applications.
SKETCH
on the Revo Plus
Program has now also, as reported in News in this issue, been

applications brings the Revo Plus even closer to the Series 5/5mx specification.

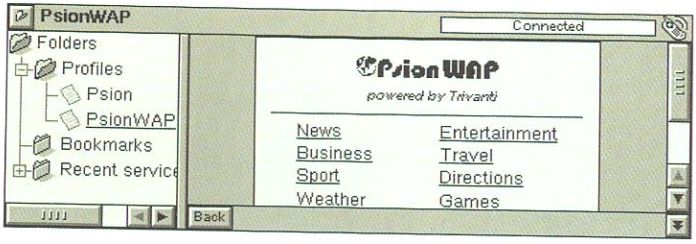
WAP and Opera

Although the flimsy packaging proudly proclaims the presence of the Revo Plus' two main inclusions, registered versions of the secure Opera web browser and Psion's WAP browser (both reviewed in issue 30), you'll not see them mentioned again inside the box. In a quite staggering cost-cutting measure, the manual included is simply the one for the old Revo—there's not even an appendix, addendum or leaflet to describe the Revo Plus' two new cutting-edge applications.

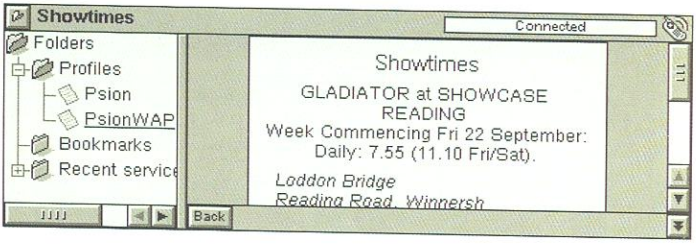
Booting up the supplied PsiWin CD wasn't much more help—although there are buttons on screen to install Opera and WAP, there's no sign of any documentation. After a little ferreting around, I eventually discovered an Adobe Acrobat (PDF) file for the WAP browser, but Opera is left without any manual at all. Psion's less-than-convincing



Back to the good old days when you could program on the move!



First steps with the WAP browser and the PsionWAP portal



WAP proving very useful—looking up local cinema show times

official response is that users are expected to use the built-in help database in each application.

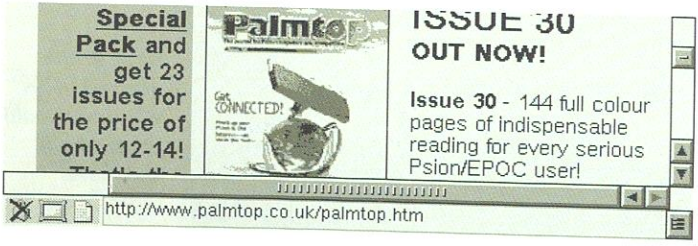
It's a tribute to the quality of Opera and the fact that the web browser paradigm is well understood that the lack of documentation isn't really a problem. I'm not going to let Psion off the hook though—the rest of the Revo manual is so good that these omissions are glaringly obvious.

In use, both Opera and Psion's WAP browser are both high quality applications and every bit as good as previously reported. Web browsing with Opera is fast and secure, with the only real problems coming on bloated sites which feature heavy use of Javascript.

Armed with the PsionWAP 'profile' from *www.psion.com/wap*, I was browsing WAP content only five minutes after first tapping on the icon. Although the amount of content is still quite limited, what's available is appropriate and interesting, and the speed of WAP sites is certainly impressive.

Examining the Plus

You'll almost certainly have tried out, or at least read about, a Revo by now, but essentially it's a very stylish miniature 'clamshell' (the Revo Plus is clad in silver and graphite grey instead of silver and blue) with the usual ingenious mechanism, a virtual Psion trademark. In fact, the elegance of the


Special Pack and get 23 issues for the price of only 12-14!
Palmtop
Get CONNECTED!
ISSUE 30
OUT NOW!
Issue 30 - 144 full colour pages of indispensable reading for every serious Psion/EPOC user!
http://www.palmtop.co.uk/palmtop.htm

Opera is as slick as ever and works well on the Revo Plus

design far exceeds the rather clunky 'boxy and held together by wires' Series 5 arrangement. As with the original Series 3, the Revo is a triumph of curves and is designed to slide easily into most pockets as-is. Judging from owners of the original Revo, the design also seems to be extremely robust—I've not heard of a single screen or hinge failure.

The keyboard is functional, if not exactly a pleasure to use, with front-hinged keys that require a fair amount of pressure to register. As with the original Revo, a 3M reflective film behind the LCD screen makes for extremely high contrast in normal light conditions, with pixel dimensions of 480 x 160, smaller than the Series 5 but the same as the old Series 3. The screen is touch-sensitive, of course, but the one on the Revo Plus feels much softer than the Series 5 or original Revo, with significant depression of the top layer needed in order to register a tap.

Considering the criticism that Psion have endured in the press (Palmtop magazine included) for the lack of a backlight, it's reasonable to assume that there are overriding technical limitations which have prevented its inclusion and to cut Psion a little slack. Although the rival Palm V range all have screens using essentially the same technology as the Revo Plus, they use an unconventional 'inverted' backlight arrangement that only works well in pitch darkness. This is satisfactory for a pen-based organiser but of course useless for the Revo Plus, as in total darkness you can't see the keyboard. In addition, the Palm's screen is little more than half the size of the Revo's, and backlighting the larger screen would necessitate extra circuitry that might be difficult to squeeze into the svelte Revo form factor.

As we go to press, the first reviews of Sony's new CLIÉ organiser came through, with reports of a high contrast screen that featured a 'normal' backlight. This technology will hopefully seep through into future Psion models in due course.

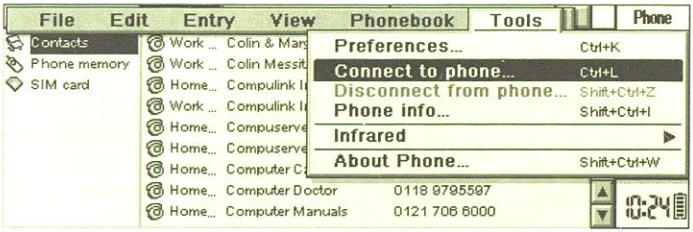
Other hardware features

The Revo Plus stylus is as plastic and as lightweight as ever, although it does tend to grow on you. Certainly the friction latch arrangement for keeping it place seems to work more reliably than the fragile mechanism on the Series 5 range.

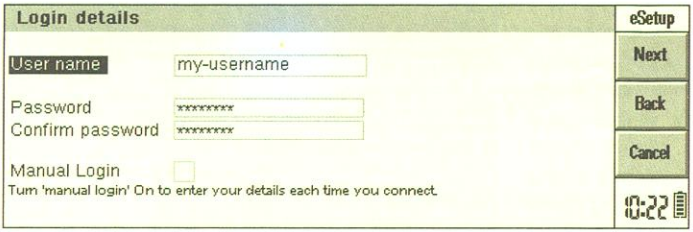
Infrared seems to be the way to talk to the outside world these days, with the Revo's infrared port being the main channel to printers, modems and other handhelds. Coupled with Psion's own 56k infrared Travel Modem or a modern infrared GSM mobile phone, it's certainly easy to get online.

For wired connection to a PC, a normally inaccessible serial connector on the Revo's bottom is exposed when the palmtop is open. This mates with a plug onto the supplied docking cradle and makes sure both charging power and data lines are established properly. It's a system that largely works well, although placing the Revo on the cradle accurately is slightly more fiddly than it looks.

The use of a NiMh rechargeable battery in the Revo Plus has also proved controversial, given the technology's low cycle life (around 500-1000 charge/discharge cycles, very roughly equivalent to two or three years worth of normal use, assuming that the cradle is used every day) and fickle nature. Although NiMh is flexible in when and how much it can be recharged, trickle charging to full capacity needs careful electronic control and the cells can be damaged if allowed to discharge too deeply. Don't worry unduly though, as the Revo Plus



The Phone application keeps Contacts and your mobile phone in sync



Taking the strain out of configuring an Internet account, with eSetup

handles all this for you. Battery life on the review unit was excellent, of the order of a week's typical use on a single charge.

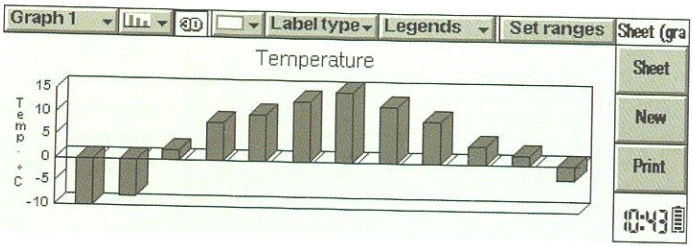
Most reported Revo battery problems have been due to other factors. Early Revos had a hardware fault such that their batteries discharged when left in the docking station, but this was quickly fixed by Psion in later units and in the Revo Plus. In addition, owners have sometimes ignored the instructions in the manual to let the palmtop charge fully before using it for the first time, confusing the monitoring software. In such cases, Psion recommend backing up, running the battery down and doing a hard reset. Finally, the integral serial port connector has been known to shake loose after a while, causing charging problems—the Revo Plus includes a redesigned connector that should prove more robust.

On the softer side

In terms of software, the Revo Plus runs essentially the same version of EPOC Release 5 as the original—our review model was build 1.06(353) and the only changes are apparently related to language variants. This is a pity, as the Revo version of ER5 is known to have a few minor bugs—I experienced a spontaneous reset (when switching to a built-in application) during the review period, and I've heard of others enduring the same behaviour with the original Revo.

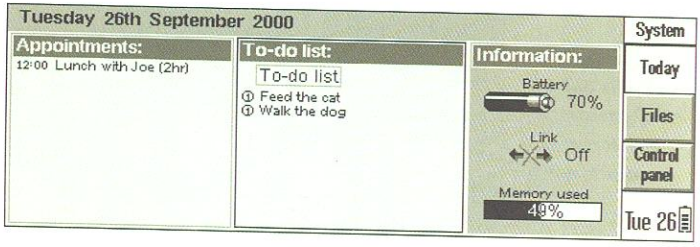
You'll already be familiar with most of the applications: the only additions to EPOC since the Series 5mx have been Phone, a competent mobile phone manager, Today, a 'Palmtop at a glance' System view, and eSetup, a step-by-step wizard that talks you through setting up an Internet connection for the first time. Plus, of course, the aforementioned extras on the PsiWin CD (WAP browser and Opera).

As hinted at in recent issues, PsiWin's idiosyncrasies and omissions continue to be the weak link in the Psion palmtop range. Dropped and erratic connections to both of the editorial Windows 98 PCs were all



Still smarter than the average palmtop —EPOC's powerful built-in applications

Today's appointments and To-do items at a glance, in the Revo's handy Today view



too common (often requiring a reboot) and there's no real support for Microsoft Office 2000. The solution hopefully lies in the forthcoming PsiWin update, which Psion are finishing off at the moment. The (welcome) plan is to release it as freeware in November, ensuring that every EPOC owner across the globe can then upgrade to the latest version at no cost.

Third party software for the Revo continues to appear apace, with most shareware and commercial programs now fully compatible or available in specific Revo form.

Psion apparently plan to keep producing the original 8MB Revo (without Opera and the WAP browser, obviously), dropping the price to a RRP of £250 including VAT. With street prices likely to be as low as £220, the two Revos should sit well together on retailer's shelves.

Desirable

Provided you're familiar with the technology, the addition of state-of-the-art connectivity software plus more memory and the availability of the previously 'missing' applications all combine to make the Revo Plus a compelling and desirable solution. If you're a fan of all things EPOC and can live without a backlight then this represents an lot of functionality in a tiny form factor.

Steve Litchfield

Revo Plus

From: All Psion dealers

Availability: Now

Price: £300 including VAT

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★½☆

VGASuite/Colorgraphics VGA

One of the most innovative applications ever created for an EPOC computer was the ColorShow hardware and software package (reviewed in issue 19) that allowed the Geofox One to control a video projector. This used a modified version of Psion's Presentation Maker software to drive a Colorgraphics VGA card in the Geofox's PC Card slot. Ever since the Psion Series 7 and netBook were released, I'd hoped that someone would write drivers to allow a similar card to be used in their PC Card slot.

It took a while, but the drivers are now available, and exactly the same model of VGA card is used as for the old Geofox solution. The card is the Colorgraphics Voyager VGA PCMCIA, but you do have to make sure you specify the Psion variant, as it's also sold with software for Windows CE machines.

The card comes with a short 'pigtail' cable that connects it to a standard VGA connector for a monitor or projector. Setting everything up is trivial, though the only instructions are those that come with the VGASuite software, downloaded from the Psion Enterprise web site.

The instructions claim:

"The VGASuite, developed by Osirix Design Ltd, is a package which enables the user to connect any standard external PC monitor through the Voyager VGA PCMCIA card for the display of slides and/or 'current screen' images.

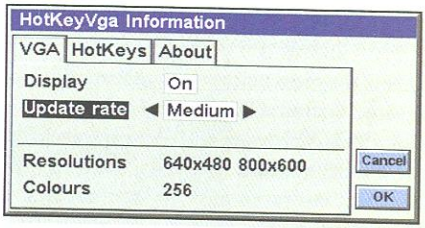
Three refresh rates are provided: slow, medium and fast. These allow for the display of both still and moving images. The slide-show utility displays BMP and PCX files. Up to 256 colours and resolutions of 640x480 and 800x600 are supported. A must for all presentations!"

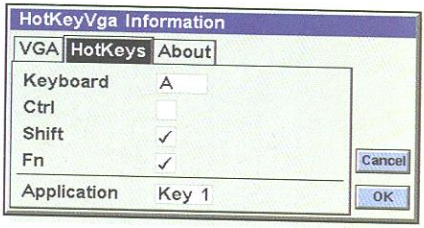
I'd qualify that last sentence to describe the VGA card and the drivers, but definitely *not* the slide-show utility, which I'll come to in a moment.

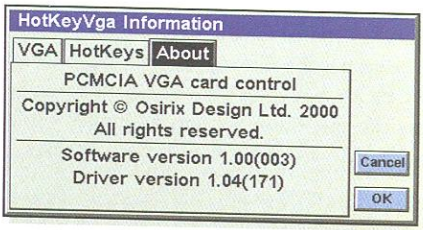
After installation of VGASuite, two extra icons are available on the Extras bar: HotKeyVGA and SlideVGA. The first is currently the more useful and provides a feature missing from ColorShow, which only sent the display from its own software through the VGA card. HotKeyVGA allows the output from any application to be displayed and this opens up a range of possibilities. The most obvious is that it helps in demonstrating EPOC software or hardware to a larger audience, but anyone wanting to make a presentation now has a chance of leaving a traditional laptop behind and using something far more portable.

Another possible application of the software might be to use a standard monitor instead of the built-in Series 7/netBook screen for general work. The display is still limited to 256 colours and is fixed at a resolution of 640x480, but it's a great deal larger and clearer. Of course, it looks a little 'chunky' on a large monitor, but that's down to the resolution of the netBook's video system. Text is certainly quite readable, but I was not personally comfortable using it for anything needing a lot of movement. Even with screen updates set to the fastest possible rate, you only get around four refreshes per second, which isn't really fast enough for following the cursor while typing or correcting text. In addition, the temptation to stab at the monitor with a pointer or finger is overwhelming!

The software is slightly idiosyncratic in that it comprises only a dialog with three tabs. One serves as an 'About' box, while the



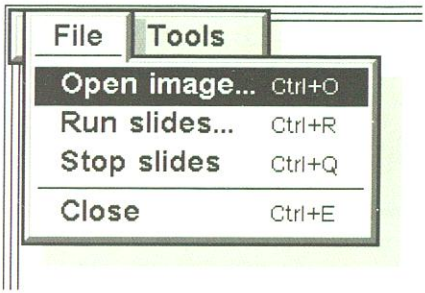




others let you activate the external display, set the update speed and configure the keystrokes and/or command icon used to call up the application itself.

The display sent to the external monitor or projector is identical to the one on the Psion, so you know that your audience are seeing exactly the same things you are. The only way to quit HotKeyVGA is to close it from the System task list, but that's not normally necessary as you can just call it up and turn the external display off instead.

The second application is SlideVGA. This will only work if the external display in HotKeyVGA is turned off, and serves to show PCX or Windows Bitmap (BMP)



SlideVGA's simple interface

images only on the external display. It will either show them as you call them up manually, or from a script (in the form of a text file). A menu command allows the update speed to be controlled as before, with the slowest setting updating the external display about once a second. This is fine for providing a transition effect between slides but is too slow for most other purposes.

In SlideVGA the display is split, with the external display showing the slides and the Psion LCD showing the (rather basic) control screen. One useful feature of this arrangement is that it allows you to switch to another application to check something without stopping the presentation. It's a fairly primitive application, though. The slides can't be previewed or created on the Psion unless you resort to grabbing application screens (or exporting from Sketch) in EPOC picture format and then using a third party application such as MBMView to turn them into Windows Bitmaps.

The Colorgraphics card is one of those products that does exactly what it says, extremely well and at a reasonable price. It really needs some decent software to bring the best out of it though, and the only real candidate is Presentation Maker (reviewed way back in issue 15)—a very old product in desperate need of an update. It's horribly slow and doesn't have a slide-show preview option that would suit the driving of an external display. Let's hope this, or some other suitable application arrives to unlock the VGA card's potential.

John Woodthorpe

VGA card specifications

Graphic modes: 800x600 @ 60 Hz and 640x480 @ 72 Hz, both at 256 colours

Video RAM: 512K

Current drawn: 0.17 - 0.2 A

Voyager VGA card

From: *www.colorgraphic.net*

Availability: Now

Price: $110 (around £75)

Quality ★★★★★

Value ★★★★☆

VGASuite

From: *www.enterprise.psion.com/partners/download/vgasuite.htm*

Availability: Now

Price: FREE to Psion Series 7 and netBook users

Quality ★★☆☆☆

Value N/A (FREE)

Harden's London Restaurants 2000

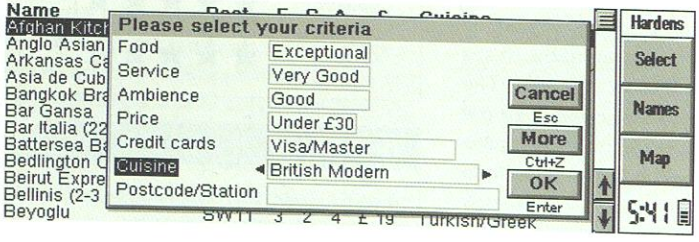
When we reviewed the 1999 Harden's restaurant guide back in issue 22, it was clearly their first foray into electronic-based guides, with an excellent dataset but one or two rough edges on the programming side. Though not all of those limitations have been addressed in the 2000 edition there have been some useful improvements, and the data is so useful as to make the few remaining gripes seem less important.

Being a mirror of the £8 paper-based guide book, the Psion version contains quite extensive information on 1,404 of London's 10,000 or so eateries. The spread of the guide is admirably broad, with everything from Patisseries and coffee shops to £100 gourmet extravagances. The simple interface lets you search by quality of food, service and ambience (graded as 'Don't care', 'Good', 'Very good' and 'Exceptional'), price (in six categories, through the usual 'Don't care', ranging from 'Under £20' to 'Over £50'), what credit cards are accepted, and the type of cuisine. A second page of search criteria lets you specify 'business' or 'romantic' settings, outside tables, good view, open late, entertainment, children's facilities and smoking/non-smoking areas.

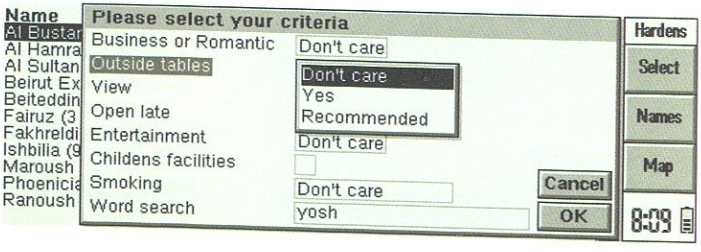
The all-important cuisine category gives more than 70 to choose from, including some more general types such as 'soup', 'fish and seafood', 'ice cream' and 'organic', as well as 'Chinese', 'Indian', etc. Always keen to try new dishes, I was delighted to find plenty of eclectic choices ranging from Afghani to Tibetan.

Apart from 1-5 quality ratings in each category (1, oddly, being the best), the 'review' text for each entry is presented as a series of anecdotal quotes from a selection of the thousands of contributors to the guide.

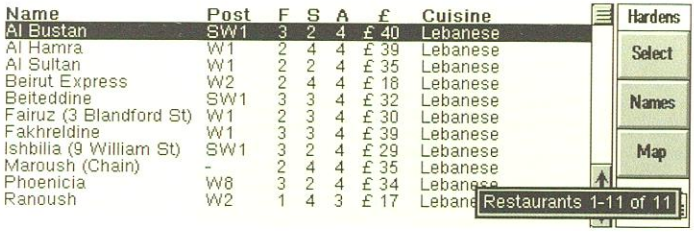
There's really no question that you'll find plenty of appeal if you're a regular visitor to the UK capital, and the pocketability of an EPOC palmtop in preference to a paper book gives no excuse not to have the guide always to hand when needed.



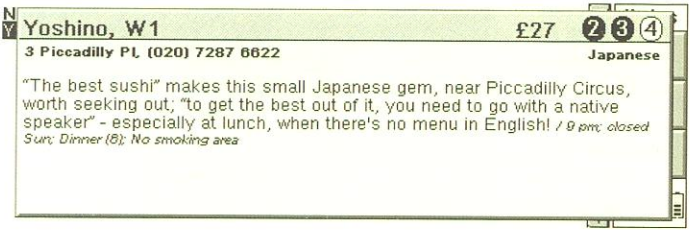
Selecting your search criteria from more than 1,400 London eateries



The second criteria screen, with further search options


Name Post F S A £ Cuisine
Al Bustan SW1 3 2 4 £40 Lebanese
Al Hamra W1 2 4 4 £39 Lebanese
Al Sultan W1 2 2 4 £35 Lebanese
Beirut Express W2 2 4 4 £18 Lebanese
Beiteddine SW1 3 3 4 £32 Lebanese
Fairuz (3 Blandford St) W1 2 3 4 £30 Lebanese
Fakhreldine W1 3 3 4 £39 Lebanese
Ishbilia (9 William St) SW1 3 2 4 £29 Lebanese
Maroush (Chain) - 2 4 4 £35 Lebanese
Phoenicia W8 3 2 4 £34 Lebanese
Ranoush W2 1 4 3 £17 Lebanese
Restaurants 1-11 of 11
Hardens
Select
Names
Map

Viewing a list of selected locations


Yoshino, W1
£27
3 Piccadilly Pl (020) 7287 6622
Japanese
"The best sushi" makes this small Japanese gem, near Piccadilly Circus, worth seeking out; "to get the best out of it, you need to go with a native speaker" - especially at lunch, when there's no menu in English! / 9 pm; closed Sun; Dinner (£); No smoking area

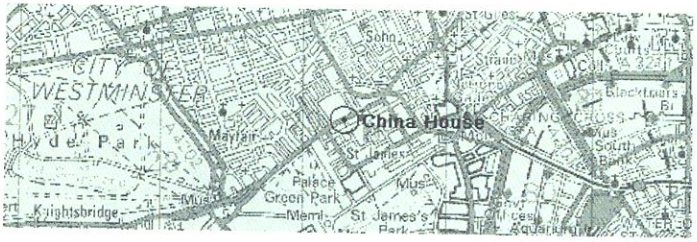
The main descriptive text for a selected restaurant, including phone and address details

Searching for a place with the right selection of attributes is a simple matter of going through one or two dialog boxes and then choosing 'OK' to proceed with the search. Search performance has thankfully been improved since the pitifully slow 1999 guide, and it normally takes only two or three seconds to come up with a list view of matching locations. You can then tap on any of the list view headings to sort alphabetically by that category, though the sort can inexplicably take several tens of seconds to complete.

Tapping on an item in the list view brings up its full entry. You can also search by restaurant or road name, or for places within a specified distance of a given postcode or tube (subway) station. Annoyingly, there's no single button or command to clear all previous search criteria at once, so you'll often find yourself having to wade through all the settings, just to make sure you haven't still got 'Children's facilities' set when looking for a business lunch spot.

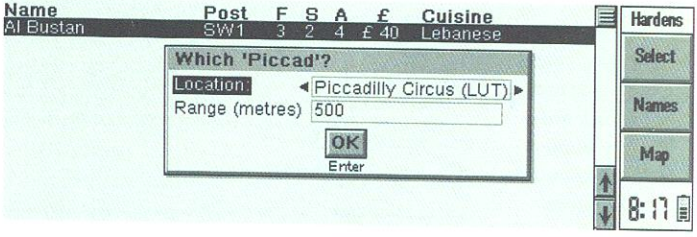
This lack of sophistication in the interface surfaces elsewhere in the program. Tapping any of the icons within an entry makes the entire dialog box disappear rather than offering a useful description of what you've just tapped, and selecting 'Help' brings up a simple Word file rather than the usual help database. Invoking the promising-looking 'Map' option gives only a low resolution digitised Ordnance Survey map of the relevant area, with the selected restaurant ringed and roughly centred on screen. The map is neither zoomable nor scrollable, and no street names are given, making it useless for all but the most basic orientation.

Given the quality of the built-in map, the program authors have sensibly added the option to export restaurant locations to a Street Planner (reviewed in issue 27) overlay file. If you own a copy of Street Planner then this solves the mapping issue at a stroke, showing precise locations for all entries, apart from chain restaurants that have multiple entries.



Not much help—a lacklustre map to (supposedly) pinpoint your desired location

Searching for all locations within a given range of a specified tube station or postcode area



New to this version is the ability to add full details for your own restaurants, though there's still no facility to add your personal comments to the existing ones.

All in all, Harden's London Restaurants 2000 loses marks for failing to make maximum use of its computer-based format, but is generally straightforward to use and contains a mass of good data that is more readily accessible than its paper-based counterpart.

To sweeten the pill further, the price has been halved since last year's edition (which can be upgraded for only £8), and it now runs on the Revo (taking around 1MB of storage space) as well as all the larger-screened EPOC models.

If you're looking for a London restaurant guide then Harden's certainly isn't the best example of slick programming I've ever seen, but the price is right and it gets the job done.

Steve Clack

Harden's London Restaurants 2000

From: *www.hardens.com*

Availability: Now

Price: £15 inc. VAT

Quality ★★★½☆

Value ★★★★☆

S5mboles

After adding a useful clipart selection to the built-in Sketch application on the Series 5/5mx and Series 7/netBook, Psion then proceeded to hobble it by failing to make that selection extensible—leaving users to make the best of the 72 icons and symbols supplied. There's no workaround from within the Sketch application, but ingenious freeware author Huub Linthorst has done the job with an ambitious macro for Pascal Nicolas' superb freeware Macro5 utility.

For those unfamiliar with Macro5, which we introduced in our 'Getting along with Macro5' feature in issue 25, it's a program that runs in the background, monitoring your keypresses. When a pre-defined hotkey combination is pressed or the Macro5 program itself is invoked, it will run any of the macros (essentially little programs) you've got loaded. A huge library of these are freely available, to perform tasks as simple as changing a font size, to popping up an on-screen clock or controlling the backlight timer. You can also create your own macros, either by setting the program to 'record' and then mimic your own keystrokes, or by writing your own macro program code—essentially a subset of OPL with a few additional Macro5 functions.

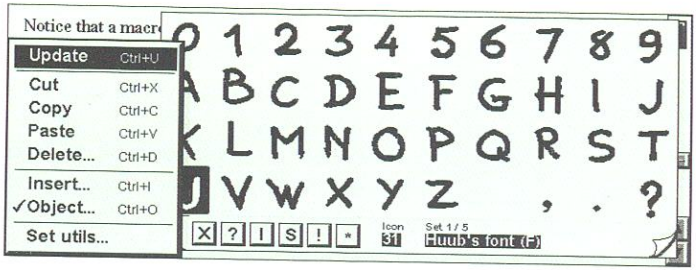
Macro5 can be freely downloaded from *pnicolas.epocboulevard.com* .

The author of 'S5mboles' (his interpretation of the French word for "S-y-mbols") has created what must surely be the most intricate macro yet. Once loaded and set up (together with Macro5, without which it cannot operate) it looks exactly like any other add-on program. It comes with an excellent help file which, in combination with the good documentation supplied with Macro5, should enable even a relative novice to load and configure the latter, then install S5mboles from its own SIS file.

Note that Macro5 has not as yet been adapted to work on the smaller screen of the Psion Revo or Oregon Osaris, so it's not currently possible to make use of either Macro5 or S5mboles on these EPOC machines. Full Revo compatibility will be added to Macro5 in the near future.

Once up and running, the default S5mboles installation presents four screens of 40 icons each, which can be pasted into any underlying application. This means that you can go into (for instance) an Agenda entry, edit the text, press the S5mboles hotkey combination (say [Fn]+[Ctrl]+[S]) to pop up an icon panel, then tap on the icon to insert it into the entry.

One of the default icon and object sets supplied with S5mboles, ready to insert into any EPOC application


Notice that a macr
Update Ctrl+U
Cut Ctrl+X
Copy Ctrl+C
Paste Ctrl+V
Delete... Ctrl+D
Insert... Ctrl+I
✓Object... Ctrl+O
Set utils...
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
A B C D E F G H I J
K L M N O P Q R S T
U V W X Y Z , . ?
Icon 31
Set 1 / 5
Huub's font (F)

A complete 'font' set, with one of S5mboles' floating menus shown alongside

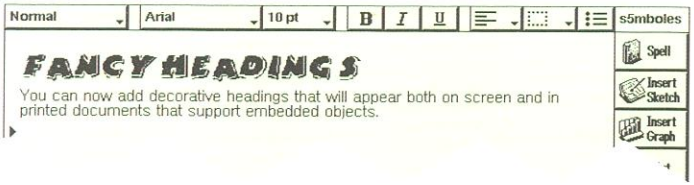
Each of the supplied icons are 48 pixels square, as with those built into Sketch. It's easy to add your own, edit, delete or rearrange the existing ones, or even add graphic objects that are bigger than 48x48 pixels. Icons can be modified or added directly from within S5mboles' own editor, whereas larger items must be created as embedded objects within another application, such as Word, and then selected and inserted with [Ctrl]+[I]. Larger objects can be graphics, blocks of text—even spreadsheet fragments or sound clippings. These don't appear on the S5mboles screens as custom icons, but as generic icons showing the application type that created them (see top left of icon panel in the screen shot on the previous page), plus a short text description that you're prompted to add yourself.

Some of the font sets available...

One of the most obvious uses of this is to scribble out your signature in Sketch, then include it as an S5mboles object for quick insertion into your correspondence. It's also possible to do this by keeping a separate Word file containing all your frequently-used objects, but S5mboles is a quicker and more elegant solution.

The 48x48 icons are as useful (or use*less*, depending upon your point of view) as those built into Sketch, but if you're already in the habit of embellishing your Agenda entries with descriptive icons then you'll instantly take to S5mboles.

Even with the somewhat limited value of an endless supply of icons, there is at least one other good use for S5mboles: decorative typefaces for use in document headings. By creating a set of graphical icons to represent the letters A-Z, plus 'Space' and the numbers 0-9, it's possible to paste in a sequence of icons to create whole 'words'. This is made easy by assigning each letter and number to the corresponding keyboard character. You can just pop up a 'Font' icon



Using S5mboles' font sets to add a decorative heading in Word

set on screen, then type out the letters of the text you want, which will paste the required icon 'letters' into your underlying application. Of course, the 'letters' look a little rudimentary when printed because of the low 48x48 pixel resolution, but this is a limitation of the concept rather than the software.

Working with S5mboles is made easy throughout by the author's impressive attention to detail. Tapping on appropriate on-screen buttons brings up floating menus from which individual icons and entire sets can be manipulated. You can page through sets of icons with a quick tap on the corner of each 'page', and there are at least 40 additional icon sets and 10 'font' sets available for free download from *pgoubier.free.fr.*

Pasting a single icon (or other object) is achieved by double-tapping on it or pressing [Enter], and multiple icons can be pasted in succession with [Shift]+[Enter]. Multiple icons won't appear in the document until you press the final [Enter] to paste them all in, which requires an element of 'working blind'. If you're pasting in from a font set, the string of letters will helpfully appear in a small dialog at the top corner of the screen as you type.

By default, each icon (or object) must be retrieved from disk and processed before pasting in, which introduces a delay of a couple of seconds each time. It's possible to force any or all of the icons to be saved to the Psion clipboard for instantaneous access, though because of the way EPOC stores the individual small files, it takes up around 300K of disk space for each set of 40 icons. Provided you don't have dozens of icon sets, this 'installing as objects' option is well worthwhile, and icons that have been set up in this way are easily identified by an inverse-video display on the icon panel.

Aside from the modicum of time and effort needed to get to grips with and configure Macro5 before loading up S5mboles, there's little to be said against it, and it's impossible to tell that it's actually a macro rather than a 'real' program.

If you need to make extensive use of icons or access a number of regularly-used embedded objects then S5mboles is the solution. It's powerful, flexible and free.

Steve Clack

S5mboles

From: Download from *pda.tucows.com/epocsoft.html*

Availability: Now (English, French, German, Dutch)

Price: FREE

Quality ★★★★½

Value N/A (FREE)

PREVIEW

nConvert

Hot on the heels of our XConverter review in issue 30, here's another new alternative to PsiWin for those who need to convert documents and images between Psion and other formats. Neuon have created this modular application to do essentially the same job, converting documents from one format to another on the Psion palmtop itself. Such programs are a godsend to anyone needing to email readable file attachments directly to PC users, or for those with non-PC desktop computers, for which no PsiWin equivalent is available.

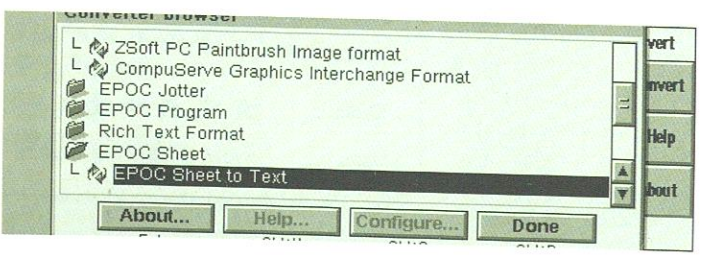
Still in the beta test phase, the current release (version 0.4) has plug-ins to allow conversion of the following formats:

- EPOC Word to RTF and HTML.
- RTF to EPOC Word.
- Sheet to MS Excel 4.1, CSV and HTML.
- Sketch/PCX/BMP/MBM/GIF/JPG conversion in both directions.
- Netscape HTML bookmarks to/from Web bookmarks (ER5 only).
- Jotter to RTF, HTML and EPOC Word.
- EPOC Program to/from ASCII text.

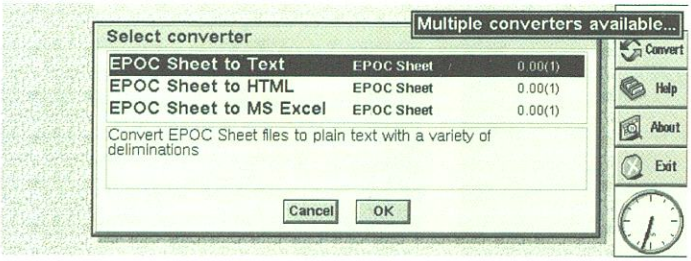
As both XConverter and nConvert do essentially similar jobs in a similar way, making a direct comparison between the two is inevitable. Although XConverter has added support for database conversion, nConvert handles a larger number of image conversions in both directions, and adds support for Web bookmarks and Program text. XConverter has better handling of raw text and different code pages, including Unicode, but nConvert's image handing makes it the number one choice if you need to work with pictures. Another bonus of the latter is that it handles embedded objects, so a Sheet file embedded into a Word document will also be converted. Both packages allow for other plug-ins to be added, and Neuon will shortly be releasing their development kit so that third parties can write new modules for nConvert.

nConvert works very well as a conversion tool and is both fast and efficient. Selecting the 'Convert' command from the menu or toolbar prompts for a filename and then proffers the available conversions in an intuitive way. The converters require no configuration, making them very easy to use. The handy 'Converter browser' allows examination of the converters that you've installed, showing a detailed description and contact information for each developer. There is also provision for 'special converters' which don't require selection of a source file, though none of these were available at the time of going to press.

All the conversions I tried worked very well, especially the conversion to HTML, which



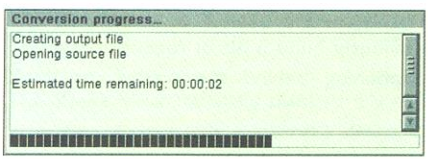
The converter browser running on a Revo. Note that the dialog box is not yet correctly scaled to fit



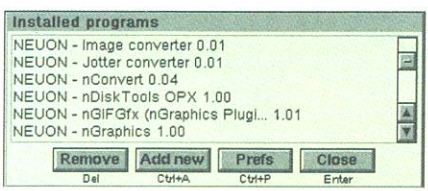
Sheet conversions currently available

even makes use of style sheets. It was hard to fault either the quality of the resulting files or the application's speed. Rounded off by a fairly useful help file, my only real gripe is that each convertor has to be installed separately via individual SIS files. I can see why Neuon have taken this modular approach, but the downside is a slower installation and a cluttered 'Add/remove' section in the Control panel.

nConvert runs on all EPOC computers, although the supporting documentation states that it is not compatible with the ER3 service pack from Psion. A separate version for the Series 7/netBook supports colour.



A file conversion in progress



Lots of detritus left in Add/Remove...

nConvert is still under development, which is immediately apparent if you're using it on a Revo. Although it runs perfectly well, the screen is not optimised and many of the dialogs don't display correctly. As well as addressing this, future plans include support for EPOC Data to DBF, MS Excel 97/2000 import/export, conversion of files in batches and use of a recogniser to allow conversions to be launched directly from the System screen or from email attachments.

The race is now on between XConverter and nConvert to see which will be the first to amass a complete set of file convertors, and it's pretty clear who the winner will be—the user.

Pete Sipple

nConvert

From: Neuon (*www.neuon.com*)

Availability: Now (beta version)

Price: £20

Quality	N/A (beta release only)
Value	N/A (beta release only)

Ericsson R380

As covered in our preview in issue 30, the Ericsson R380 is a curious but exciting option that sits between the current EPOC Release 5 palmtops (Revo, Series 5mx, etc.) and the 'next generation' EPOC Release 6 Quartz and Crystal communicators. Designed by Ericsson's UK plant in Manchester, it takes the baseline ER5 operating system and twists the interface and applications to its own ends.

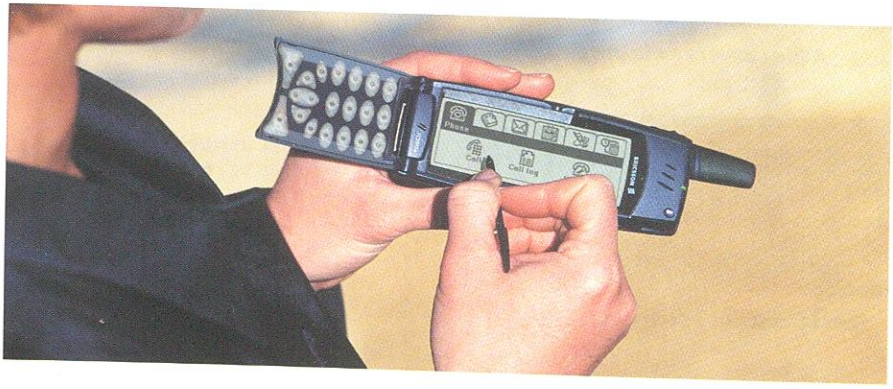
The hardware is certainly impressive, weighing in at only 157g complete with battery. When you consider that the R380 is intended to replace both your mobile phone and your Psion palmtop (and possibly various other adaptors and accessories), the form factor immediately feels right. The phone keypad swings down to reveal a modern touch-screen PDA, with a plastic stylus that slots into the rear of the battery. With the pad up, the screen is typical of a modern WAP phone, with it down, a 360 by 120 pixel screen is revealed, with a backlight that is turned on with a button at the top of the phone.

As mentioned in issue 30, the R380 is 'locked down', for reasons of telecommunications approval, so there's unfortunately no way to install third party applications (unless you count running WAP applications via the Internet). The built-in set is largely sufficient for many people's needs though, especially considering the relatively small screen and limited battery life—thoughts of reading etexts or playing complex games are definitely not the R380's focus.

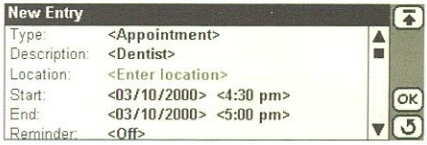
At the desktop end, each application is synchronized, if appropriate, using the supplied 'R380 Communications Software' Windows utility. Worlds away from PsiWin, and working in standalone fashion, this connects directly to the R380 via the supplied serial cable and seems to work very well. In case you don't already have a suitable desktop PIM, a full copy of Lotus Organiser 5.0 is included on the CD.

Calendar

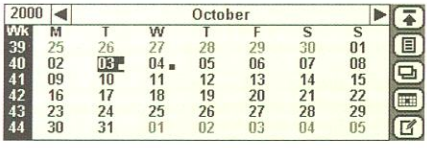
This is fully featured and uses the vCalendar standard. It can be synchronized with the calendars in both Lotus Organiser and Microsoft Outlook. The synchronization takes a few minutes to work but there's obviously quite a bit of record conversion happening behind the scenes, as you'd



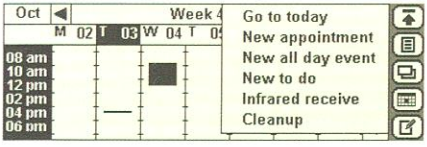
expect given the differences between the R380 phone and a Windows PC.

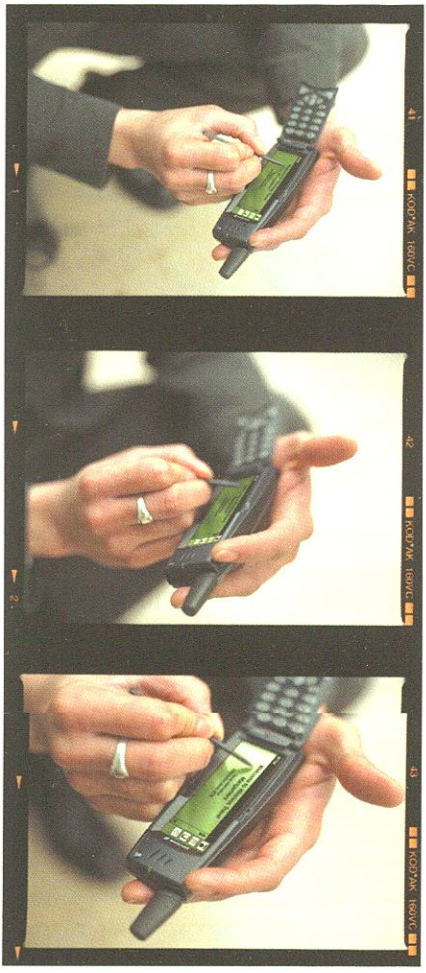


Calendar is split into five parts: the Month view, Week view, Day view, To do view and New appointment. The Month view displays a month at a time, also showing the week number on the left side of the screen. Dates with appointments/all day events on them are shown with a black square and/or a black diamond. You can jump straight to a date by tapping on it, which from experience seems the best way of moving around this application. Within the month view you can also jump to other months in the same year.

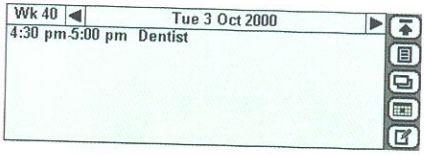


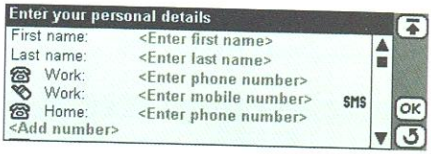
The Week view naturally displays a week at a time, showing time intervals down to two hours. This view compares to the 'Busy' view of a Psion Revo: it shows slots which are 'busy' and therefore also shows free time at a glance. If a busy slot is tapped on, the appointment text is displayed.

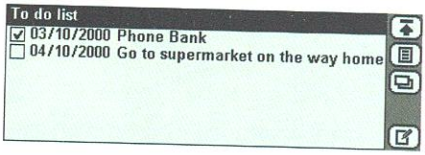


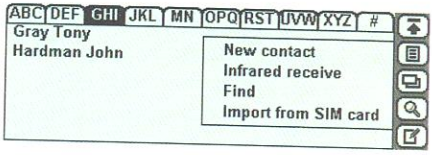


The contents of the Day view are usefully visible from the phone menu as well, avoiding the need to open the R380's keypad to show the full PDA form of the application. The to do list compares to that of Psion's Agenda, though it's a pity that you cannot create new lists. To do entries are also displayed in the Day view. A small box next to each entry enables you to tick it off when completed.





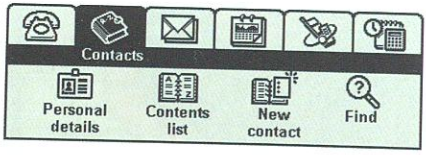




It's possible to beam individual entries to and from Agenda on a Psion palmtop via infrared, letting you keep the two in step where necessary.

Contacts

This is also a fully featured application, this time using the vCard standard. It can be synchronized with the contacts database in both Lotus Organiser and Microsoft Outlook.



Contacts is split into four parts: Personal details, Contents list, New contact and Find. The Personal details section is obviously used to record your own contact details, for beaming to other PDAs. The Contents list displays records under alphabetical tabs, grouped in threes, e.g. 'ABC', 'DEF', etc. The records can either be displayed in a list or a detail mode, the latter with all contact information shown. A scroll bar on the right side of the screen helps somewhat in the search for a particular record.

When entering a New contact, the following fixed labels are available: First name, Last name, Work tel, Work mobile, Work fax, Home tel, Home mobile, Home fax, Email, Web, Job title, Company name, Street, Town/city, Post code, Country and Notes. These should be more than adequate for most people, and of course the Notes field can be used to keep extended contact details. New records are automatically inserted in alphabetical order.

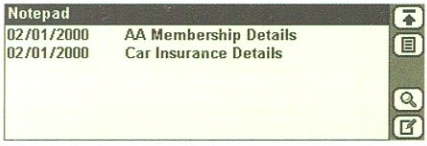
The Find facility lets you search for any alpha-numeric text within the database. Searching is very slow though, taking 28 seconds to search for a specific entry in my 600 record contacts list. This is obviously a lot slower that searching for the same contact on a Revo or other Psion palmtop.

Again, it's possible to beam individual records to and from Contacts on an ER5 Psion palmtop via infrared. Transferring greater numbers of records has to be done by working on a PIM on the PC and using synchronization to update the mobile units.

Notepad

Closer to a jotter than a word processor, perhaps not surprisingly given the relative difficulty in entering significant amounts of

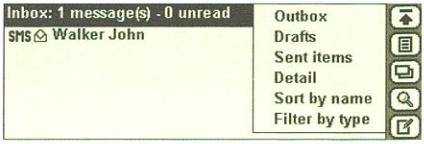
text on the R380, Notepad can be synchronized with its counterparts 'Notepad' in Lotus Organiser and/or 'Notes' in Microsoft Outlook. All records are listed in date order—it's a pity they cannot be manually ordered or perhaps made alphabetical. The familiar cut, copy, paste and 'Select all' facilities are available when editing a record. Unfortunately, text records can't be transferred directly between the R380 and a Psion palmtop—copying chunks of text into a note in a dummy Contacts records and beaming from there is the usual workaround.

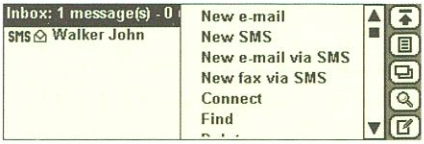


Messaging

Any standard POP3 or IMAP4 email account can be set up for use with an R380. The 'Messaging' suite comprises of Inbox, New email, New SMS, Find and Generate passcode. The Inbox view can also show messages in the Outbox, Draft and Sent messages folders. With New email, you are prompted with the usual template of To:, Cc:, Subject: and Message:. An Account option lets you switch between multiple email accounts—very useful if, like myself, you have several free ISP email accounts set up. When entering the To: and/or Cc: fields, email addresses can be selected from any in your Contacts list, in a similar fashion to the same feature on other EPOC devices. SMS addresses can also be selected from the Contacts list.

Curiously, Messaging synchronizes email only with Outlook Express, not with Outlook, as supported by the R380's other PIM applications.

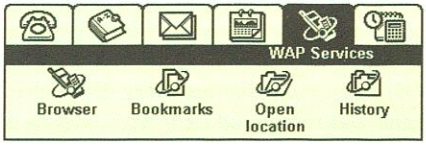


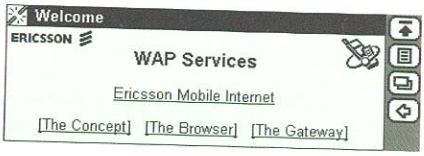


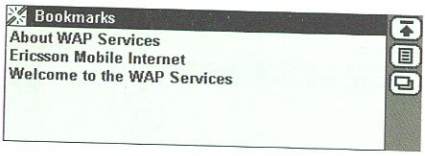
As with Calendar appointments, messages can be read from the standard phone menu without opening the R380 flap, although not, alas, deleted as well.

WAP

The built-in WAP browser is very good indeed. Once you have configured it with your WAP provider and gateway, the R380's landscape screen makes WAP browsing pleasant and impressive. Its bookmark feature is useful to keep your favourite sites listed and to hand. Having integrated (and quick) access to Internet content in a single slimline device is simply wonderful, and a glimpse into the future of mobile computing.

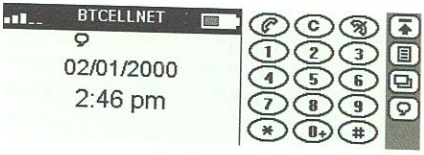


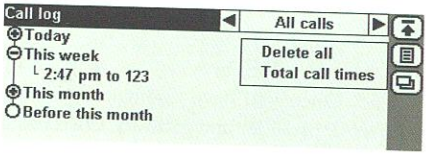


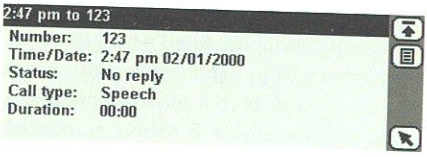


Phone

Working in both phone and PDA mode, Phone is a phone dialler and call logger, breaking down your calling history to the level of who each call was made to and how long it lasted.

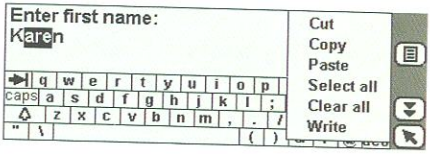


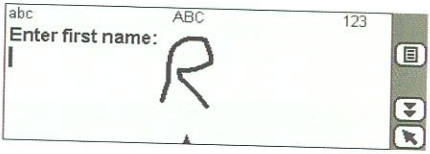




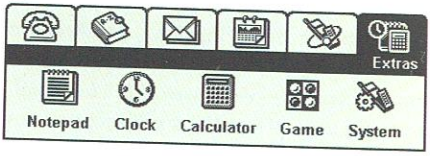
Extras

The R380 comes with a version of CIC's 'Jot' gesture recognition system, but it's not optimised as well as its rival Graffiti (on Palm OS) and I found almost every other character was recognised incorrectly, making it unusable. Although I dare say that recognition would improve with practice, I find the on-screen keyboard much quicker and easier to use.



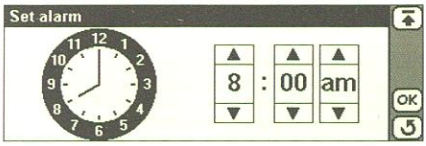


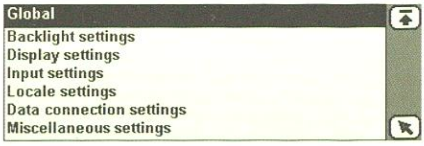
As mentioned in our preview in the last issue, there are a few extra applications included for good measure, including Clock, Calculator and Game (Reversi), none of which hold any real surprises. All applications work to a different rule book than current Psion palmtops, with no concept of a menu system. Instead, right-hand toolbars offer icons for common operations and pick lists of commands and views, as you can see from the various screen shots.

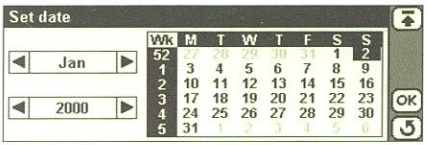


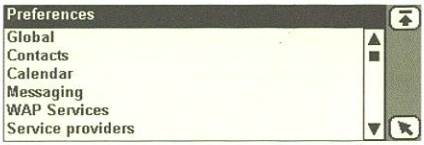
A System icon, despite what hardened Psion owners might expect, simply leads to a large hierarchical set of application preferences and control settings.

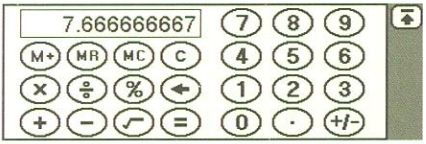
Battery life is quoted as 80 hours of standby or PDA use and two to three hours of phone use. More than any other mobile device

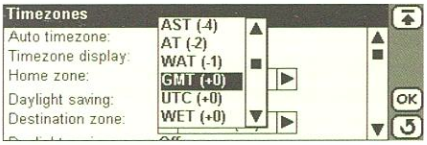


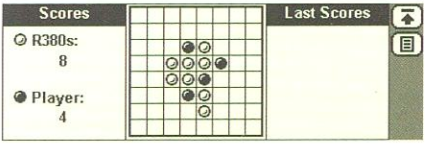












I've owned, the R380 deserves to be used, making the most of both its relatively high purchase price and its one-piece mobility and versatility. As with other mobile phones, putting it on charge each night is a necessary part of the daily routine.

Having the phone and PDA in a single unit can cause a few problems. One is solved by the use of the Ericsson T28 hands-free kit, letting you operate the PDA while on the phone, perhaps entering details of a new appointment or editing a contact's note. Not so easily solved is using the R380 during an airline flight, where the mobile phone ban effectively stops you using the PDA side as well, although this obstacle will be the same whichever of the next generation of

communicators you decide upon. I suspect that ultimately it will be up to the airlines to solve the technical problems involved with smartphone and communicator use in the air.

R380 versus the Revo

In perhaps the biggest compliment to the R380, I have personally put my Psion Revo to one side and currently use the Ericsson R380 alongside my Psion Series 7. My Revo Agenda and Contacts were initially transferred to the R380 via synchronization with Lotus Organiser 5.0 and use of a PsiWin upgrade patch, 'Org56', which enables synchronization between Lotus Organiser 5.0 and a Psion palmtop.

My personal and company calendar is kept on my R380 and I synchronize it with Lotus Organiser on my PC at the start and end of every working day. I keep the Contacts list synchronized by beaming the occasional new record between my R380 and Series 7 via infrared. As with the Psion palmtops, the R380 comes with a quick backup routine, which I use regularly (of course!)

Ozzie Hall-Osman

Ericsson R380

From: usual Ericsson dealers

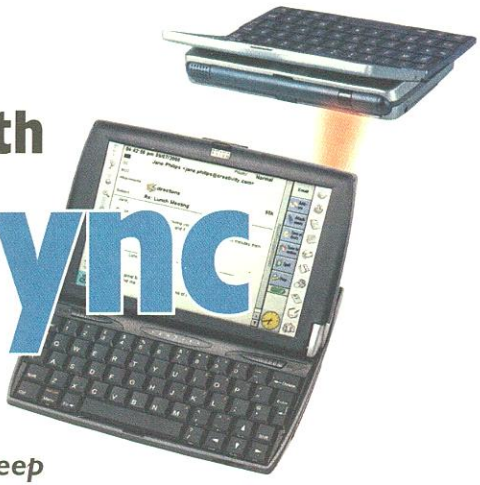
Availability: Now

Price: around £300+VAT with airtime contract, around £450 without contract.

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★☆☆

Getting along with EpocSync



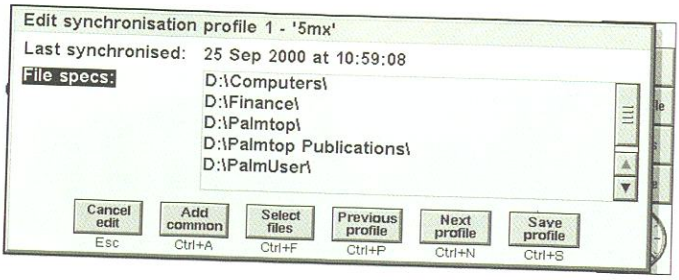
Steve Clack looks at what this ambitious utility can do to keep you in step with a second EPOC device or the Psion emulator, or to keep Internet-based backups of your important files

Given how useful this program can be and how well it works, it's quite remarkable that EpocSync has appeared as freeware. Such a product would be quite marketable as a £30 commercial program, and it's to the authors' credit that they're offering such a useful program at no cost.

EpocSync?

Before going into any more depth, let's look at exactly what the program can do for you:

1. If you own two EPOC devices (say a Revo and a Series 7), you can keep selected files and folders updated between the two. Likewise, you can use it to keep your own files in step with a family member or colleague's EPOC machine. The link can be made by either infrared or cable connection.
2. You can use it to keep files from your Psion in 'sync' with those running on the EPOC emulator (as covered in our article in the last issue of Palmtop). This makes it easy to use the larger screen and keyboard of your PC to work on files when you're deskbound. In addition you can instantly switch to the emulator should your Psion be lost or in need of repair.
3. If you have FTP access, you use your FTP space for secure off-site storage of important data. Most modern Internet accounts include several megabytes of free space to create your own web site, with files being uploaded using the FTP protocol. This space can equally well be used for storage of backup files using EpocSync's FTP feature.



Setting up a profile to define which files and folders are to be synchronized

Choosing what to sync

Setting up which files to synchronize is simplicity itself. You can either tap the 'Edit' button and use 'Select files' to choose individual files and folders (directories), or use 'Add common' to choose from the most commonly used default locations used for file storage. Note that rather than using the 'Select files' option to add files and folders, you can also type filenames and paths directly into the 'File specs:' window. You can even use wildcards, so it's possible (for instance) to sync all files in the '\Documents' folder of the 'C:' drive that begin with the letter "a", by entering the path as "C:\Documents\a*".

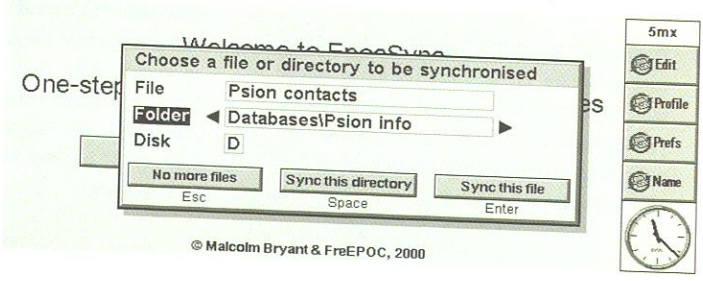
You can safely set any of your data files for synchronization, including any that are currently open and in use. EpocSync will automatically close these files as necessary and re-open them when they have been successfully synchronized.

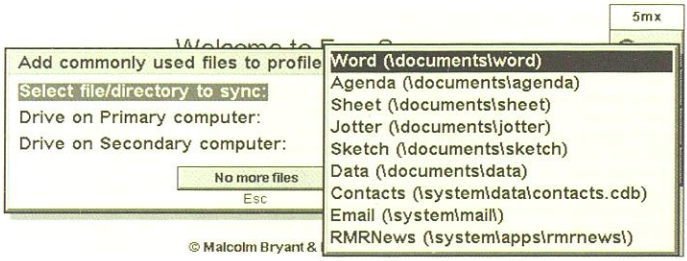
A cautionary word

As with any program that needs to overwrite or rename files, it's important to have a basic understanding of how EpocSync operates before making serious use of it. Without this knowledge, it's quite possible to inadvertently lose important data. After reading this article you'll be able to get the most from EpocSync and ensure that no mishaps occur.

When choosing files to synchronize, be careful before attempting to synchronize anything within your System folder(s). Many of the files therein are either machine-specific or may be associated with installed software that is keyed to the UID (Unique IDentifier) of a specific machine. See our article 'Inside the System folder' in issue 28 for more on this. Unless you're confident in your knowledge, it's best to avoid syncing *anything* located within a System folder.

Tapping on 'Select files' brings up a familiar file browser dialog





Using 'Add common' to bring up common default file locations

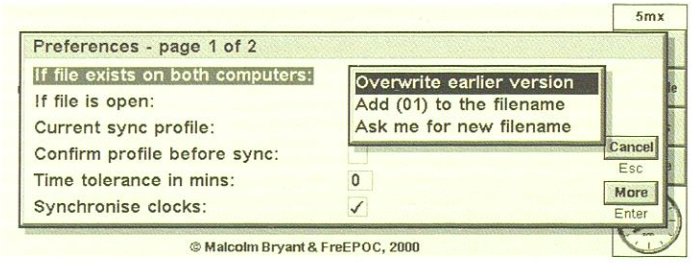
No syncing?

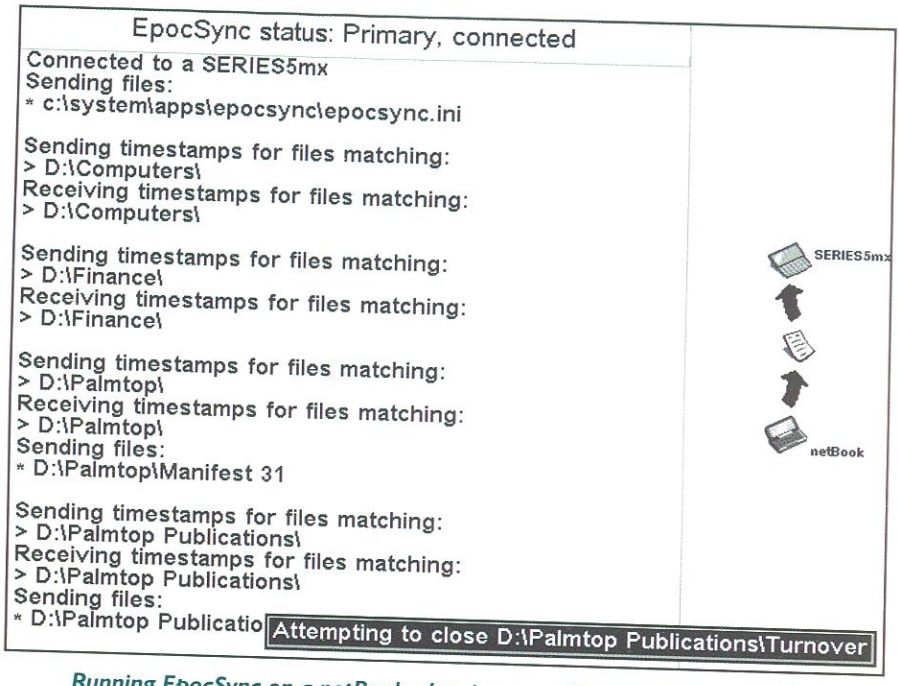
Despite its name, a fundamental limitation of EpocSync is that it doesn't really 'synchronize' files at all, at least not in the sense you might expect. When you run EpocSync, it's not capable of looking *inside* files to examine what has changed. Instead, it simply compares any filename that appears on both machines (or on the PC emulator or FTP site) and overwrites whichever file has the oldest modification date. Don't be under the impression that it will copy individual Agenda entries, Data records or Contacts entries to bring files into sync, because it won't.

You can elect to have older files appended with the extension '(01)' or even have EpocSync prompt you with a new filename, but in most cases you'll want it to overwrite older files with your most recently updated versions. This works exceptionally well if you keep two EPOC machines for your own use. An example of this is if you have a Series 7 or netBook for use at base, and a Revo or Series 5 to keep in a pocket when you're travelling. If you want to keep a number of important files on both machines you can run EpocSync before you go out, then use the Revo or Series 5 while away, syncing back to the Series 7/netBook on your return. Provided the second machine remains unused while you're away, there is no possibility of conflicts that can otherwise arise when a file has been updated at both ends since the last sync. If you then use the Series 7/netBook while back at base, another sync before your next trip will bring the two machines back into line once again.

Good as it is, EpocSync has no facility to warn you that a file has been updated on both machines since it was last run. It will simply obey your settings to either overwrite the older file, append to the filename or prompt for a new one. For this reason it's important to think very carefully before syncing with another person's machine, or

Deciding what to do when a file exists on both computers...





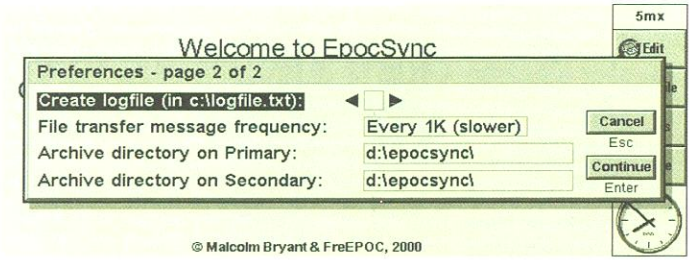
Running EpocSync on a netBook, showing a scrolling list of 'synced' files

with one that may have had the same file modified at both ends since the last sync. If in doubt you can of course elect to keep the older file and just rename it, but if changes have been made at both ends your only option is to compare the file contents manually and update the two by hand. This is awkward enough for small files, but for larger files can represent many hours of work and is still not foolproof, so make sure you avoid getting into this situation.

Watch those dates

Another important point to watch is that the time and date are correctly set on the synced machines. Remembering that EpocSync's logic simply overwrites or renames older versions of the same file, any discrepancy between the date and time of the two synced machines may result in unexpected behaviour. EpocSync can be helpfully set to synchronize the clock of the 'Secondary' machine to that of the 'Primary', and in addition you can set up a time 'tolerance' of up to 15 minutes to allow for small differences in individual clocks. If you're connecting regularly to the same machine then it's unlikely to be an issue, but do take care before syncing with an unknown device.

A less obvious pitfall stems from the fact that EpocSync works on the 'Last changed' date/time of each file. Because EPOC only updates this value when a file is closed, it's important to ensure that any files that are usually left open (such as Contacts) do not contain any unsaved data that may be over-



Added security with logfiles and archiving facilities

written. By setting EpocSync's preferences to 'Ask me what to do' with open files, you can avoid any unexpected overwrites.

Multi-sync

If you want to sync with more than one other EPOC device, EpocSync allows up to three 'profiles', where you can specify exactly which files and folders get copied between each companion machine.

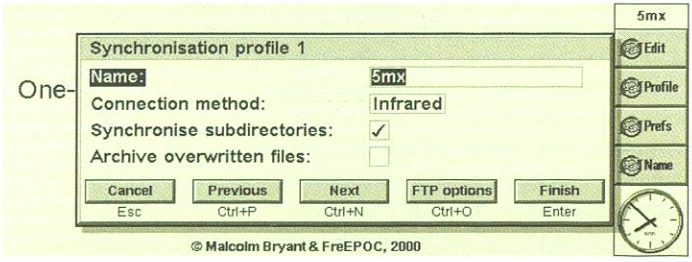
Safety nets

If you're really concerned that you might inadvertently set EpocSync to overwrite important files, you can always set its preferences to archive copies of all overwritten files on one or both devices. Beware that this can fill up disk space quickly though, and provided you follow the guidelines given here you shouldn't need to be quite so cautious. Another safety measure is to switch on the 'Create logfile' option in EpocSync's preferences. This creates a text file summarising all the files and folders that are transferred at each sync operation, and is useful if ever you need to check what got copied where. Again, a little forethought should make even this unnecessary. After more than a month of daily use with my own Psion computers, I haven't experienced a single glitch or overwritten file—testimony that with a little care, EpocSync is a robust and reliable tool.

Synchronizing emails

If you intend to use EpocSync to keep your email database in step between two machines, be sure to follow the detailed instructions given in the online help file. This gives important information on which files should be copied across, together with a few precautions to prevent messages accidentally being transferred in both directions. Note also that emails can only be synchronized between two ER5 models, which

If you want to synchronize nested subdirectories then don't forget to check this box...



excludes the Series 5 'Classic', Geofox One and the Oregon Osaris.

FTP syncing

One big disadvantage of travelling with a mobile computer is that it can be difficult to make proper backups while on the move, and almost impossible to keep those backups separate from your palmtop computer, and therefore completely safe in case of disaster. EpocSync's recently-added FTP facility will allow you to copy selected files and folders to an Internet-based FTP site. This creates an updateable remote backup of your selected files, located with your Internet Service Provider. By monitoring the last modification date of each file, it will only transfer those files that have changed since the last backup, therefore minimising connection time and resulting call charges. As each sync requires a dial-up connection you'll probably want to limit the backup to your most important data files, particularly if using a 9600bps mobile phone link.

The whole process works admirably well, but if you're travelling outside your own time zone remember that the FTP server may be several hours ahead or behind your local time. EpocSync's 'FTP options' dialog allows you to set an offset of plus or minus 23 hours to compensate for this.

Synching with the emulator

In view of the fact that the EPOC emulator is effectively a 'virtual' palmtop running inside Microsoft Windows, you won't be surprised to learn that EpocSync can connect directly to this software-only counterpart. The emulator passes through all EPOC serial communications to the PC's COM port 1, so as long as your PsiWin cable is plugged into this port you should have no problems.

Using EpocSync for this is much more elegant than redirecting the emulator to use your backed-up files and then having to remember to manually copy them back again onto the palmtop afterwards.

Indispensable

If you own two Psions, as a surprisingly large number of people do, EpocSync will most certainly become an indispensable tool for you. If you want to transfer data with other Psion owners then you'll need to ensure everyone understands who's allowed to work on which files between synchronizations. A single instance of a file that's been modified by two or more parties can cost you a lot of effort to put right, laboriously scanning through a file's contents to check who's updated what.

If you run a single EPOC device then this program still has much to recommend it. For PC owners the emulator synchronization gives the most convenient route to keeping Psion files on your desktop, and the FTP synchronization option is a great way to keep important files completely safe but quickly accessible.

EpocSync is freely downloadable from www.freepoc.de .

Printing on the DESKTOP

Jeff Haines offers some pointers on outputting from your Psion to a desktop printer

In the last issue, we looked at portable printers currently on the market and how they perform when printing from your Psion palmtop. Now, we'll offer some more general advice for anyone wishing to print from one of the bewildering array of desktop printers.

Desktop or portable?

If you're planning to buy a printer to use specifically with your Psion, you may be unsure whether to get a portable or full-sized desktop model. If you envisage ever needing to print on the move then of course a portable unit is the only option (in which case read our 'Printing on the move' article in the last issue). If your printer will always be desk-bound, however, a portable printer represents unnecessary compromises, being both more expensive and generally of lower specification than a desktop equivalent.

Inkjet or laser?

Many home-based users dismiss laser printers out of hand, assuming them to be more expensive both to purchase and to run. With laser printer prices still dropping year by year, you can now get a perfectly serviceable unit for £2-300, and running costs can be significantly *lower* than with inkjet printers. Consumable prices and specifications vary enormously, but an £80 laser toner cartridge that lasts for 10,000 pages will be costing you less than one pence per page, whereas 'per page' costs for a £20 inkjet cartridge that only lasts for 500 pages will be more than four times as much.

Print volume

If you only expect to print a few dozen pages per month, the lower purchase price of an inkjet may still make it a better buy, and if you're short on desk space, remember that the average inkjet printer is substantially smaller than even the most compact laser printer.

If you print more than a few hundred pages per week, you'll definitely appreciate the higher speed of a laser, which is ultimately more robust and better built to cope with larger print volumes.

Always treat 'rated' print speeds for any printer with a good measure of scepticism. Most inkjets will manage no more than one or two pages per minute when printing from a Psion, whereas lasers will generally output at least 4-20 pages per minute, depending upon specification.

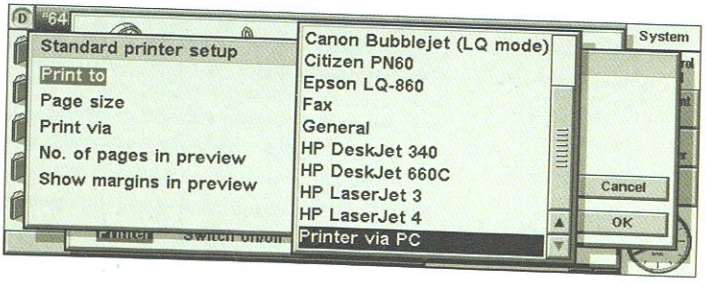
Quality

Although almost all modern printers provide perfectly acceptable output for even the most critical correspondence and reports, bear in mind that inkjet printers will only give their best results when used with good quality, 'coated' paper that doesn't allow the wet ink to soak in unduly. Laser printers don't suffer from this (as the 'ink' is actually not ink at all, but a fine dry powder that's 'fused' to the paper) allowing you to use a much wider variety of (often cheaper) stock. Also, when printing graphics, inkjets can spread a large amount of ink onto the paper, which will saturate all but the best 'bond' papers.

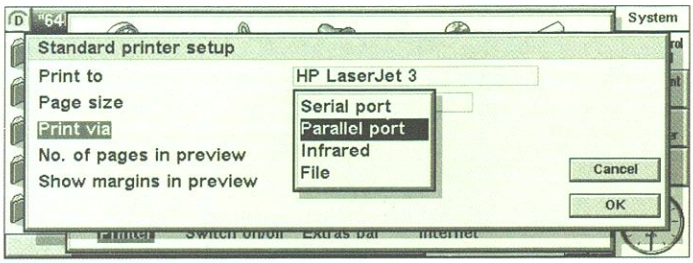
Compatibility

There's no doubt that, following a close second to PsiWin troubles, printer compatibility problems are one of the biggest headaches in the Psion world. As we've stressed before within the pages of Palmtop, the best way to ensure that your documents print correctly is to use one of the *exact* printer models shown in the 'Printer' section of your System Control panel. Printer driver updates are issued from time to time to address bugs and limitations in the existing software, both from third parties and from Psion themselves. If your printer sometimes gives unexpected results or fails to print anything more than endless blank or garbled pages, you'll need to keep an eagle eye open for such driver updates. The best source for driver update information is the Newsreel section of Palmtop magazine.

Apart from the built-in options, support for other printer models occasionally appears. An excellent generic Postscript (level 1) driver has been created by Andrew Johnson, and this is available on recent Palmtop CDs in both ER3 and ER5 versions, as 'PS-ER3.SIS' and 'PS-ER5.SIS' respectively. Most modern network laser printers have Postscript support, as do the vast majority of Apple Macintosh-compatible printers.



Do yourself a favour—use one of the exact printer models listed under your Control panel



Don't forget to set 'Print via' to reflect your connection mode

For desktop inkjet printers, compatibility is generally limited to the Canon Bubblejet range and the Hewlett Packard Deskjets. If using a laser printer, compatibility is generally assured, as virtually all models comply with the universal 'HP Laserjet 3' or 'HP Laserjet 4' standard, and give perfect output with either one or both of these drivers.

Older printers

If you have an ancient dot matrix printer that still gives acceptable output, you can try using the Epson LQ driver that's built into current EPOC models. There are often DIP switches built into dot matrix models to allow them to 'emulate' Epson LQ mode, so check the printer's manual if you're having difficulties.

Existing printers

If you're planning to use an existing office printer it will almost certainly be a laser printer, in which case you can use either the 'HP Laserjet 3', 'HP Laserjet 4', or the generic Postscript driver as mentioned above. You'll probably need to ask permission before plugging into a shared office printer though, so be sure to check first.

In the event that you can't find a suitable driver, the 'General' driver built into all EPOC devices may allow you to print at least the raw text of your documents, though all font and graphical information will almost certainly be lost.

Making the connection

Regardless of which printer model you're using, you'll need to connect it to your Psion in some way (unless you're using 'Printer via PC', as outlined below). These are the options:

Infrared. By far the easiest means of connection. If you're lucky enough to have a printer with an infrared 'eye', just go into 'Printer' in your Psion's Control panel and set 'Print via' to 'Infrared'. You should then be able to point your Psion at the printer and get trouble-free output. If you don't have an infrared-enabled printer but would like to add this convenience, several infrared adaptors are available, including Psion's own infrared printer pod, as shown on page 9.

Parallel. A virtually universal standard with modern printers, if you purchase a battery-powered Psion Parallel Print Link (around £35, not available for the Revo), you'll be able to connect directly to any printer's Parallel (Centronics) port. There are no configuration issues with the parallel connection—you just have to set 'Print via' on your Psion to 'Parallel'.

Serial (RS232). The most fiddly option to set up, and many modern printers no longer have a serial port, but it does avoid having to buy a parallel link cable—you simply use your PsiWin cable (though you may need a 9-pin to 25-pin adaptor). You'll need to delve into your printer's manual to find out the correct serial settings and then match these on your Psion—see our 'Starting up: printing' article in issue 23 for more details on how to do this. Note that serial printing can be considerably slower than with a parallel or infrared connection.

Office printers

Most modern office lasers have multiple ports, including parallel *and* serial, together with Ethernet network connections (which you can't access directly from a Psion). Multi-ported printers normally allow more than one port to be connected (and used) simultaneously, automatically prioritising print jobs. This means that you may be able to connect your Psion to the parallel or serial port of a networked office printer, and leave the cable in place for quick access whenever you want to print, without disturbing other users.

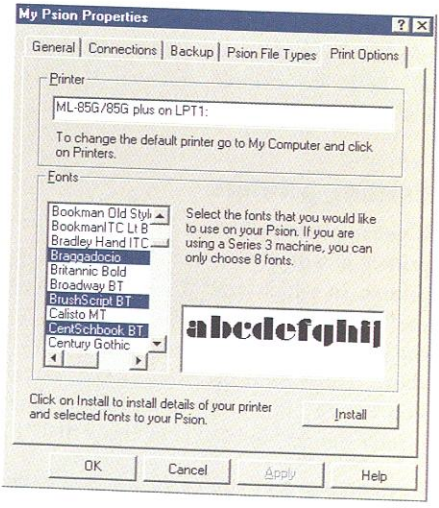
Printer via PC

If you're using a Psion in conjunction with a desktop Windows PC, or you're permitted to load up PsiWin on your office machine, the easiest way to avoid compatibility problems is to use 'Printer via PC'.

As long as you have a PsiWin connection established to your PC, the Psion can effectively print using Microsoft Windows' own printing routines and your desktop printer. PsiWin merely acts as the conduit, passing on the appropriate printer instructions.

Of course Windows, with its TrueType font technology, can employ many more typefaces than your Psion, and with a little configuration you can use these extra fonts in your printed documents. By going into PsiWin's 'My Psion Properties | Print options', you can download information about as many Windows fonts as you like. This is then stored in the Psion's System folder and used to help your EPOC applications work out how many characters will fit onto each line and page. Don't expect to see these fonts on screen though—it's purely a printing solution and EPOC itself can only display the usual three base fonts (Courier New, Arial and Times New Roman).

The best thing about printing 'via PC' is that you never have to worry about specific printer drivers at the Psion end or feel limited by a tiny range of fonts and type sizes—Windows takes care of everything and ensures that the output looks as good as you intended.



Get connected!

Pete Sipple continues our beginner's guide to getting online with a Psion computer or compatible...

In the first part of this feature, we looked at the hardware needed to connect your palmtop computer to the Internet. With that in place, we turn our attention to software.

Getting the software

The good news is that if you have an ER5 computer such as the Psion 5mx, Revo or Series 7/netBook, life is a lot easier than it was back in Series 3 or Series 5 'Classic' days. With the newer models, most of the software you need is already built into your computer. Here is a summary of the relevant software, which we'll cover in more detail after we've looked at the service providers that make Internet access possible.

- **Dial-up software** - this is built into EPOC and can be accessed through the System screen 'Control panel'.
- **Email** - the Email application is built in, and can be opened with the appropriate application icon.
- **Web** - the Web browser is not built into the ROM of any of the current Psion computers, but it can be installed from the accompanying PsiWin CD. An alternative browser is available in the form of Opera, which we'll discuss later.
- **WAP** - Psion's new WAP browser can be found on the PsiWin CD supplied with the Revo Plus. Series 5mx and Revo users can purchase a copy separately.

Internet Service Providers

An ISP (Internet Service Provider) is your gateway to the Internet. Using your modem, you dial a special telephone number given to you by your ISP and you can then access your email and the World Wide Web, via the ISP's infrastructure. It might be that you

5mx and a GSM phone?

If you have a Series 5mx and are planning to connect via a GSM mobile phone, you may need one additional piece of software. There were initial problems in communicating with some mobile phones via infrared, and Psion have since released an upgrade to address these. The fix specifically applies to the Sagem M8300/RD750, Bosch GSM908/909 and Motorola Timeport L7089, but as other users have reported that it resolves other issues, it's definitely worth installing it.

To get the update, go to *www.psion.com/downloads* and download the Series 5mx Mobile Connectivity Update v1.1.

Note that this update is not required if you use the Psion Series 5 'Classic', Series 7 or Revo.

already have an Internet account, perhaps at work or on your home PC, in which case you may be able to use that with your Psion. If not though, you'll need to pick one from the host of ISPs available—there is so much choice that it can be difficult to know just which one is right for you. Some offer free Internet access while you pay just for the calls, while others offer free calls in return for a monthly subscription fee. Luckily, it's quite easy to try a couple of different ISPs at the same time, or to change ISPs when a better deal comes along. When choosing, some factors worth considering are:

1. **Cost**. 'Free' Internet doesn't always mean *completely* free. Many ISPs mean that they don't charge a monthly fee. While this does give you free access to the Internet itself, you'll usually still be paying your phone company for the calls made. Most ISPs in the UK have a local-rate telephone number so that your call costs are low, but the charges can still mount up if you make a lot of use of the Internet. If you are intending to be online for only a few hours a month, then a subscription-free ISP may be best for you. If you plan to surf for longer, especially in the evenings or at weekends, then it may be a better bet to look for an ISP that charges you a small monthly fee (usually debited to your credit card) in return for free off-peak calls. See the boxout on pages 60-61 for a summary of some of the current deals on offer here in the UK. Note that, as stated in part one of this article, connecting to the Internet via your mobile phone is likely to be slower and much more expensive than a landline connection.
2. **Support**. With the main ISPs, setting up your account on a Psion should be fairly straightforward, but it might be worth checking out their technical support team before signing up. If they've never heard of a Psion or can only help you if you're running their own Windows PC software, then steer clear. Be warned that some ISPs charge for telephone support at a premium rate, so check their small print.

If you find yourself needing a lot of help, it could be a costly business. Some ISPs offer an email-only support service, which is not generally a lot of use if you can't connect in the first place.

3. **Extras**. Look for features such as 'webmail'. This service allows you to access your email from any computer with an Internet connection. This is particularly useful if you're away from your own computer but have access to someone else's, maybe at a Cybercafé or while on holiday. With this service, you can log on, enter your username and password, then send and receive messages as if you were on your main computer. Another extra to look for is WAP access—you may be able to access your account with a WAP phone or the Psion WAP browser. Also worth looking out for is a generous amount of free web space—10MB should be ample if you're planning to create your own web site at some point in the future.

4. **Portability**. If you've got a computer at home or at work in addition to your Psion, you may want to be able to pick up your mail from any of these locations. While 'webmail' is useful for reading and writing messages, there's no substitute for having access to your mail with a full-blown email application like the ones found on a Psion or PC. For that reason, don't get caught out with an ISP that relies on you using their own software and nothing else. If you install an ISP's software from a CD, you may find that it customises your PC to work with their service in preference to other ISPs, making it difficult to remove or transport to another computer. On this subject, note that AOL, one of the most popular ISPs, is *not* best suited for use on a Psion. See page 61 for details.

5. **Reliability**. Network speed and stability may play a factor. Almost all ISPs offer connection at speeds of 56k (or higher for ISDN/ADSL users), but with some ISPs offering free or near-free services they sometimes suffer from congestion, meaning that engaged tones are commonplace. Check on the reliability and speed either from one of the Internet magazines or word-of-mouth from other 'net users.

Remember, you can create multiple accounts for different uses, and most allow you to cancel an account without penalty, so if a better deal comes along then go for it. Our only note of caution is that is that if you cancel an account, you lose the email address that comes with it. If you've told all of your friends and colleagues your email address, changing accounts means updating all your contacts or running the risk of losing new messages. Advanced users tend to have more than one account to get around this, or even get hold of their own Internet domain, such as *www.johnsmith.com*, so that they can juggle accounts used for connection, without losing their main email address.

Getting your first account is something that you can't generally do on the Psion itself. The most common way to get an account is over the Internet, which of course can be something of a chicken-and-egg situation. For those who don't have access to another computer (maybe a friend's or a work computer), if you phone a subscription-based ISP, they will normally post the login instructions to you once they have taken your credit card number.

Setting up the software

Before going any further, you'll need to know the following pieces of information. If

you don't have them, you'll need to contact your ISP's technical support desk:

- The phone number to dial (also called the 'POP number'). Look for a free, or local-call number where possible, e.g. '0845 ...'
- Your logon (user) name and password.
- Your email address. Some ISPs allow more than one email address, or allow you to use any name you like before the '@' symbol, e.g. 'xxxx@johnsmith.freeserve.co.uk'.
- Your mailbox (email) logon name and password (sometimes the same as your main logon name and password).
- The incoming (i.e. people sending email to you) email server address (also called 'POP3'), e.g. 'mail.btinternet.com'.

UK-based ISPs

To give you an idea of what some of the larger ISPs have on offer, here is a rundown of services and charges. These were correct at the time of going to press, but you are advised to contact the ISPs directly to confirm pricing and benefits. To aid your decision, you may like to refer to one of the many PC Internet magazines, which offer regularly updated comparison charts of ISPs together with performance ratings.

- **BT Internet** - subscription of £10 per month for unlimited access during evenings and weekends, 2p per minute at other times. They also offer a pay-as-you-go service for 1p per minute at evenings and weekends, 2p at all other times, with no monthly fee, five email addresses and 10MB of webspace, plus access to the BT Internet WAP gateway. Support at 50p per minute. *www.btinternet.com* .
- **Clara.net** - offer three packages: unlimited access and off-peak Internet calls for £10, 12 hours of off-peak Internet calls every month for an annual price of £40, or 1p per minute for Internet calls, day or night, for £7 per month. Technical support is charged at local rates. Contact: 0845 355 1000 or *www.clara.net* .
- **Demon** - calls at local rates with unlimited email addresses and 20MB of webspace for £11.75 per month. Technical support at local rates. Webmail and a regular magazine are included. Contact Sales on 0845 272 2666, or *www.demon.net* .
- **Freeserve** - claim to be the UK's number one. They offer 15MB of webspace, have no subscription charge, and telephone calls are at local rates. Freeserve recommend that if you spend more than 10 hours online per month, you opt for the 'Unlimited Freeserve time' package at £10 per month for free telephone calls 24 hours a day. Technical support costs 50p per minute. *www.freeserve.com* .
- **Psion.net** - ISP **Lineone** teamed up with Psion to create this service, which adds Psion-related content to the Lineone service. There's no subscription fee and calls to Lineone are at local rates. Lineone offer webmail, free online support, or phone support at 50p per minute, five addresses and 50MB of webspace. Contact 0800 111210 or *www.lineone.net* .

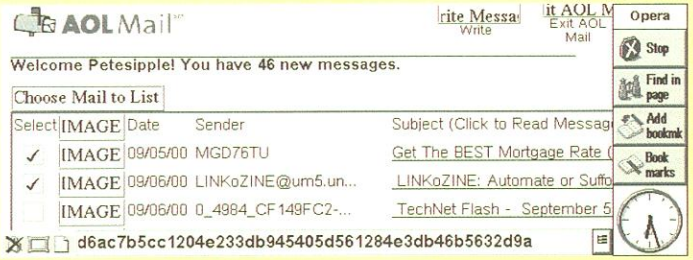
- The outgoing (i.e. you sending email to other people) email server address (also called 'SMTP'), often the same as your incoming server address.
- In rare cases, you may also need to know your 'IP' and primary and secondary 'DNS' addresses. Your ISP can give you these. You may also be told a 'protocol', either 'SLIP' or (more commonly) 'PPP'.

Once you've researched all the above, write the answers down in safe place, just in case you need them again in the future.

eSetup

If you have a Revo or Revo Plus, setting up your Internet connection can be made a lot easier by using this built-in setup 'wizard'.

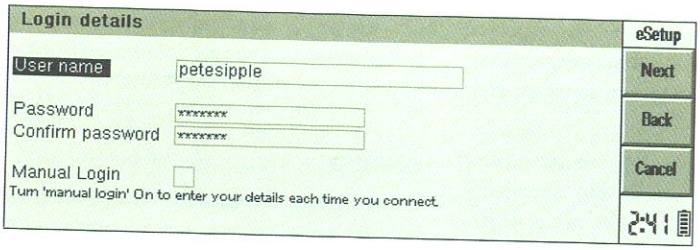
- **Virgin.net** - offer five email accounts and 10MB of webspace. They have no subscription charge and calls are charged at local rates. Technical support is at £1 per minute, or you can take out a monthly subscription to access their support team at local rates for £6 per month. *www.virgin.net* .
- **AOL** - the biggest name in Internet at the moment, but if you're planning to use AOL on your Psion then think again. They use a proprietary system that doesn't run on a Psion. If you have an existing AOL account, it *is* possible to read your AOL email by using the Opera web browser. *www.aol.com* (*www.opera.com* for the Opera browser).



Reading AOL mail with Opera

Note that some ISPs offer free trials and your phone or cable company may also be offering a good deal. One such deal worth a look is **BT Surftime**, which offers two packages for Internet access with selected ISPs. Surftime offers either unlimited calls at evenings and weekends for £6 per month, or unlimited access 24 hours a day for £20 per month. See *www.bt.com/surftime* .

Some ISPs have been trying to offer 'unmetered' access to the Internet totally free of charge, but many have abandoned their plans due to the problems of supporting the huge number of users looking for totally free access. As technology improves, expect this service to take off, but be prepared to endure advertising, which will help to pay for the free access.



Using eSetup on a Revo

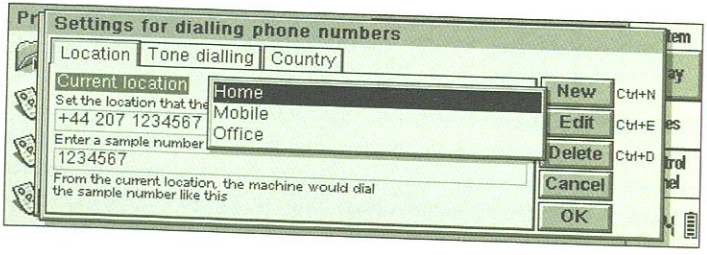
Tap on 'Extras', select 'eSetup', and the software will walk you through entering your details for the first time, asking you for the telephone number, ISP details and email settings. This is an excellent tool for those with little or no Internet knowledge. If you don't have eSetup (or are a little braver), move on to the next section for details of how to set up an account manually.

Dial-up settings

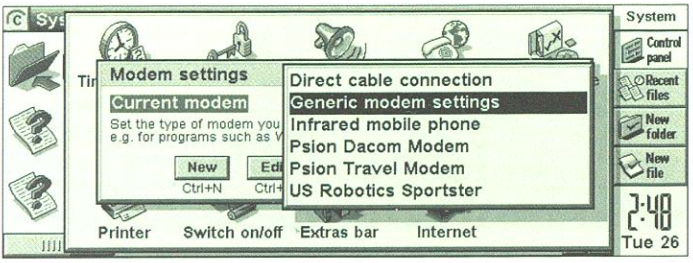
First off, go to your System screen, press [Psion]+[L] and make sure your remote link is set to 'Off'. Your modem may not connect if you don't.

From your System screen, tap on the 'Control panel' toolbar icon. You will find an icon for each of the following settings:

1. **Dialling**. This allows you to change the settings that affect the way your Psion dials out. You can select whether you are dialling from 'Home', 'Mobile' or 'Office'. If you're at work, you may need to edit your 'Office' settings to add a 'Dial out' digit of "9," for an outside line (the comma indicates a 'pause' and may be required by some older switchboards). Most of the settings in here can be left set to the default options.
2. **Modems**. Select your modem type from the pull-down list. Pressing the 'Edit' button will allow you to change settings, but for the moment, stick with the defaults. If your modem is not listed, select either 'Generic modem' or 'Infrared modem', as appropriate.
3. **Internet**. If your ISP is already mentioned, tap on 'Edit'; or tap on 'New' to create a new ISP setting. If creating a new account, choose 'Base upon: Standard settings' and complete the information supplied by your ISP (as in 'Setting up the software' above) in the five tabbed dialogs:
   - **Service** - an account name of your choosing, with the dial-up telephone number. If you plan to dial in from another country to collect your email, you may wish to 'use 'smart' dialling', which prompts you for the country



Selecting your dialling location



Picking your modem

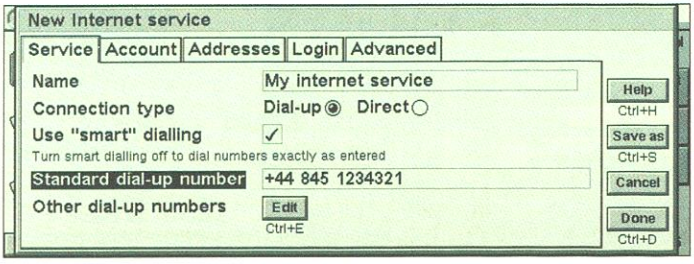
and area codes as well as the number. If in doubt, uncheck this option and enter the telephone number as normal without the country code.

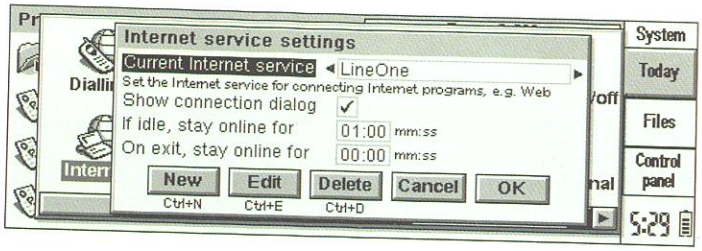
- **Account** - untick 'Manual login' and enter the logon name and password details from your ISP.
- **Addresses** - not normally required. If your ISP has supplied either an IP or DNS address, these can be entered here by unchecking the appropriate 'Get address from server' options.
- **Login** - most ISPs do not require a login script, so leave this unchecked unless advised otherwise by your ISP. Psion has supplied a general script, and should it prove necessary to use this or any other script, note that the 'Display window' option may come in handy if you are having a problem with your script, as it allows you to see a step-by-step walk-through of your logon process.
- **Advanced** - it is normal to leave these settings alone with just 'Allow plain text authentication' checked.

That's the basic setup finished, so tap on 'Done'. You should now be at the 'Internet service settings' dialog. At this point you may wish to change your 'If idle, stay online for' setting. This can prevent you from running up a large telephone bill should you fail to remember to disconnect after using the Internet. It is also useful to check 'Show connection dialog', as this will bring up a box prompting you to select your connection every time you try to access the Internet—very handy for managing more than one account, or as a warning that you are about to start running up your telephone bill. Once you have completed the settings, tap on 'OK' to save your settings, then exit the Control panel.

Hint: If your telephone company run a discount scheme for frequently dialled numbers, (e.g. in the UK, BT's Friends

Account name and number

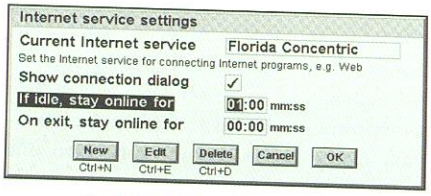




Internet service settings

and Family), don't forget to add your ISP's number, to help keep the costs down.

You have now entered enough basic information to allow you to connect to the Internet for web browsing (and indeed, if you're feeling confident, you may want to try this now to check that your setup details are correct) and you're halfway towards completing your email setup.



A phone bill-saving option

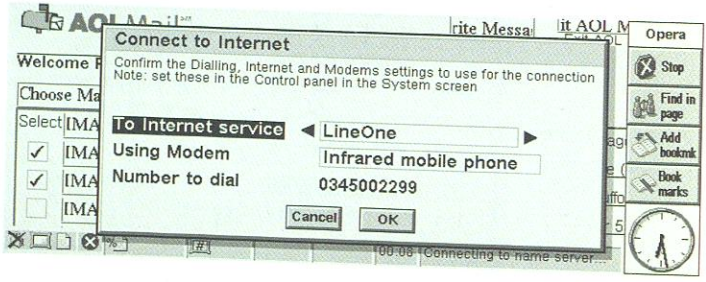
Setting up Email

Now you have to set up your email details. To do this, tap the 'Email' application icon and use the 'Add new account | Email' command (on the 'Tools' menu). You will now be presented with a dialog containing three tabbed pages:

- **Account** - enter a memorable name for this email account (e.g. "Pete (main)"), your full name (e.g. "Pete Sipple") and your email address (e.g. "pete@myisp.co.uk"). If this is your preferred (or only) email account then tick 'Set as default account'.
- **Outgoing** - enter the mail server (SMTP) address.
- **Incoming** - enter the mail server (POP3) address, including your username and password.

Once you're happy that the information in these three dialogs is correct, tap on 'OK' to save your email settings.

We will be covering use of the email application itself in more depth in the next issue, but if you've ever used a desktop email application, such as Microsoft Outlook Express, then you may be familiar enough with the



The connection dialog

Creating an email account

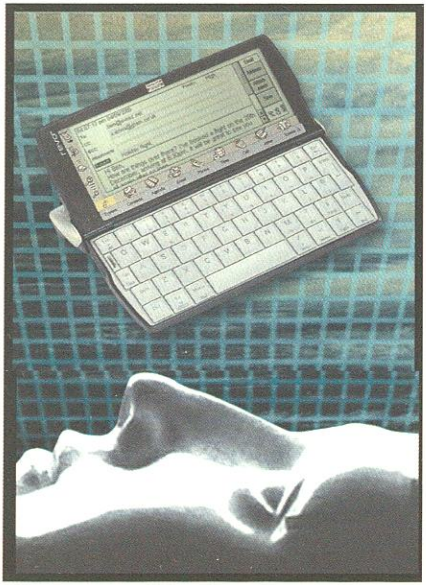
Setting up an email account

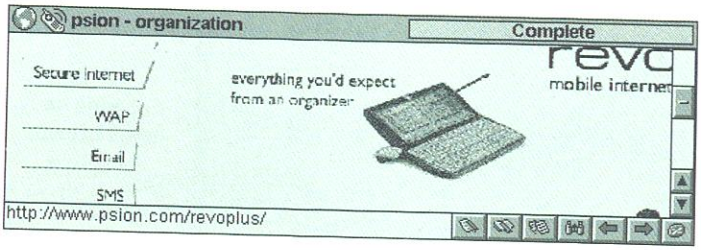
concept of an Inbox and Outbox to be able to get started.

Web browsing

If you want to 'surf' the Web from your Psion, you have two choices when it comes to software:

- **Web** - this free application was written by Symbian and can be found on your PsiWin CD. Web doesn't have some of the features you would find on a typical desktop web browser. Many web sites make use of Javascript to enhance their appearance and functionality, and most of the ecommerce and banking sites make use of SSL for transactions. The Symbian Web browser is currently unable to cope with either Javascript or SSL. It is, however, a relatively lean browser and should suffice for casual surfers or for those who are more interested in getting information than looking at impressive graphics.
- **Opera** - the Opera Web browser for EPOC has recently been launched, as reported in detail over the last few issues of Palmtop, and is a 'port' of the PC version of the browser. It has several





Surfing with Symbian's Web on a Revo

Connecting to the Web with Opera

features that cannot be found in Symbian's Web, notably support for Javascript and SSL. Although the browser is a little larger than Symbian's offering, it is quite a bit faster. The Opera browser is free to Series 7 and netBook users and is also being distributed on CD with the Revo Plus. Existing 5mx or Revo users can download this product as shareware and register if they find it useful. For more details of Opera, see issue 30.

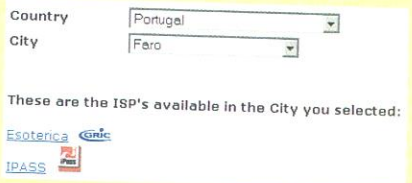
What's next?

As promised, we'll take a closer look at Email, run through some of the basics of Web, take a brief look at setting up WAP and then go through some troubleshooting tips.

Outside the UK?

The ISPs mentioned in this article are UK-based. If you're outside the UK, then the best advice is to ask around or refer to a local Internet magazine for details of ISPs.

If you have Internet access by another means, then it might we worth looking at Psion's Global Roaming database at *www.psion.com/mobile/roaming.asp*. By entering your country and town, you'll be given a list of local ISPs that are members of either GRIC or IPASS, two organisations that provide Global Internet Roaming to travellers wishing to access the Internet from outside their home country.



Working for a living:

The Manager

Gary Bainbridge shows how a Psion palmtop can help you to manage both people and resources

In recent years in Britain and other parts of Europe, there has been a considerable change in the nature of industry. As a result, many people have been forced to leave large companies and start their own businesses. This usually means adding management skills to their existing technical and practical ones.

There are many PC-based 'management assistants', but one of the problems of running a small or single person company is that you need to combine the jobs of manager, salesperson, accountant and part or full-time worker. This means that you are often away from your desk, and so some portable means of managing and staying in touch with your company is needed.

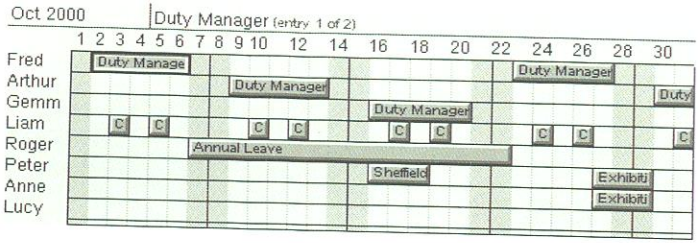
Managing contacts and appointments is an important requirement whoever you are. In a large corporation, many managers would have their own secretary, who would organise their diary, make travel arrangements and relieve them of many office tasks. In most small companies however, the manager is on their own, and in these days of mobile phones and instant access a PDA can pay dividends.

On the ball

Often a client or other contact will call when you least expect it. You need to sound knowledgeable about their requirements—scrabbling through papers to find their details always appears unprofessional. The built-in Contacts application on the Psion allows instant access to client details with just a few keypresses. Further data of the client, the current state of their project or any problems with their order can be stored in the database's freeform 'notes' fields for instant access. More importantly, that information can be with you constantly in your pocket. Ideal for when that important call comes while you are waiting in the airport or on your way to another appointment.

Beyond the built-in software, there are commercial and shareware contact managers which not only store more complete information, but also keep track of your communications with, and the tasks you need to carry out for, each client.

Anyone managing a small company will soon find that there are often simply not enough hours in the day to carry out all the tasks that must be performed. It is



Facilities Manager running on a Revo

all too easy to spend too much time on, for example, overseeing a project, only to find that you have missed the opportunity to phone an important client, or that vital appointment with your bank manager. Some form of time management system therefore becomes essential. The Psion's Agenda can fulfil many of the requirements, with its ability to store your appointments and remind you with alarms. The excellent To-do facility also reminds you of the tasks you have not yet got around to completing.

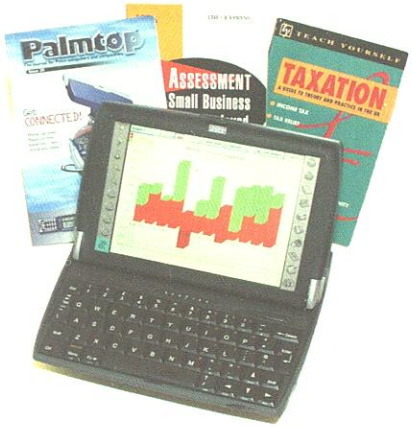
There are also several shareware utilities which enhance Agenda by adding other views and linking it in with other applications, as described in our 'Adding to Agenda' article in issue 26.

Managing staff

If you employ staff then you also need the ability to keep track of their working hours, leave, salaries and expenses. If you employ temporary or casual staff then you may need to allocate the costs against specific projects. There are several utilities available which will help with this. I will admit a vested interest here, as my own program **Facilities Manager** was written with much of this is mind. Started while I was a head of department in a medium sized company, it is essentially a multi-layered Agenda which allows you to schedule staff or equipment and monitor the time spent on different projects. It allows free-form data in the form of memos to be attached to entries and labour or contract costs to be calculated where appropriate. There are several views covering periods from a day to a month, and showing events lasting from 15 minutes to a full month. The program can also show staff leave and public holidays.

An alternative option to keep track of staff leave is **VacTrac**, which has a similar interface but just keeps track of staff holidays.

Staff expenses are another problem to track—**Expense Manager/Reporter** (reviewed in



issue 16) by PalmTop Software is one option, although it is best used by the staff members themselves. **RMRCar** is similarly available to log the use of company cars.

Doing the accounts

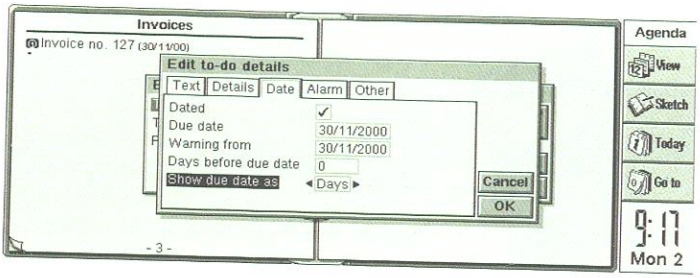
Small companies often cannot afford their own dedicated accountant and use the expertise of an outsider. Although, as in my case, the accountant is only a phone call or an email away, the donkey work of keeping the accounts still has to be carried out internally, and this often falls to a manager. If, like me, you are not a natural accountant, good accounting software is essential. There are plenty of PC options, but I find that PalmTop Software's **Money** is as good as most. I particularly like the way tax is handled, making VAT returns simply a case of copying over the figures from the appropriate VAT account. Money can create reports and extract data in Quicken format, which can then be sent to your accountant to complete the processing. Of course the portability of a Psion can have its problems—the consequences of losing the machine or having it stolen could be disastrous. You must therefore make absolutely certain that the data is regularly backed up to another format. In effect I keep my accounts twice as I also use a PC program linked into my bank's online system, but the cross-checking of the two systems is useful. I still find it easier to get the information that I need from the Psion program than from a PC.

Chasing invoices

Invoicing and credit control are another area on which a manager needs to keep a close check. I have known companies who only discovered at a major audit that there was a large invoice which had not been paid, simply because everyone had been too busy to chase the client.

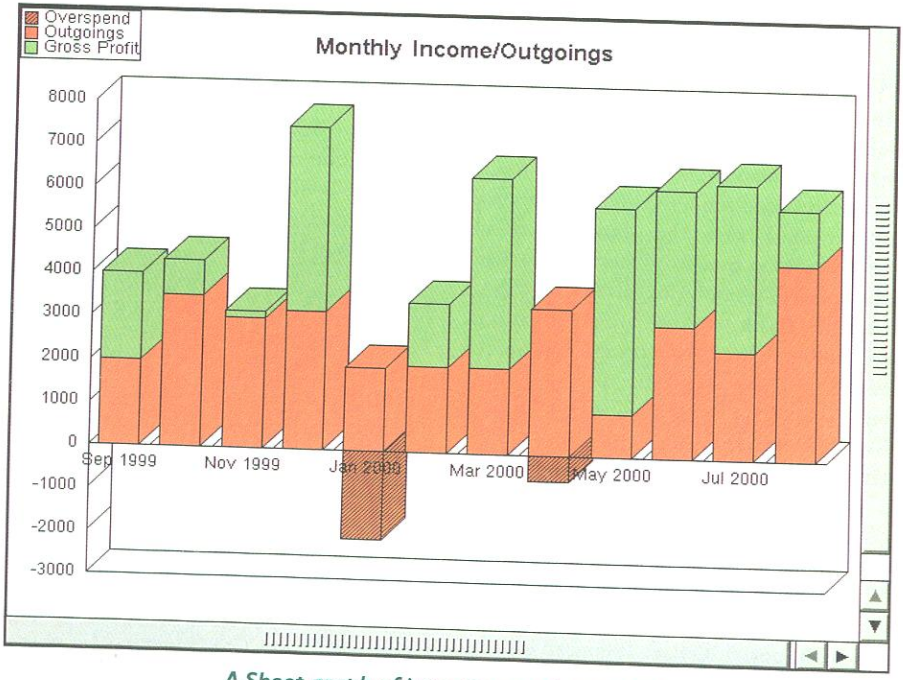
There are a few 'plain paper' invoicing systems which run on the Psion, such as **Company Accounting**, which generates invoices in HTML format. However, I have developed my own system which uses a combination of my Psion and my desktop computer, and which allows me to quote or price a job on site, then transfer the details onto a desktop PC for printing the final invoice. Although the full Microsoft Excel-based system is quite complex, I create the initial invoice on the Psion in Sheet and it is then transferred across to the PC for printing and permanent storage. Both the PC and Psion keep copies of the invoice, enabling me to check on payment and issue follow-up statements as required.

Normally, when doing work for a company (rather than for the general public), the client will request an account with you. Invoices are normally issued on a 30-day basis—that is, they should be paid no more than 30 days after the end of the month



Entering a reminder about an invoice in Agenda

when the invoice was issued. Unfortunately, many large companies stretch this credit period to its limit (and beyond), so some form of effective credit control is necessary. My own system does this automatically, but another simple way of keeping track is to create a To-do list in Agenda especially for invoices. The entry preferences should be set so that entries have a due date and are shown zero days before due date in other views. When each invoice is issued, enter it into the To-do list with the date by which it should be paid. Then delete or cross out each invoice as it is paid. Overdue invoices will then be automatically displayed in your other Agenda views for you to chase when required.



A Sheet graph of incomings and outgoings

Visualising performance

Keeping a company afloat means keeping an eagle eye on finances and cash flow. Spreadsheets are an effective means of achieving this and data can be displayed in many forms. I find the graphing facilities of Sheet an ideal way of seeing the progress of my business, in an easily understandable form. Opposite is a fictional example of a real graph I use. Using data derived from PalmTop Money, it shows monthly income and outgoings as a stacked graph. The total height of each column above the baseline is that month's income, while the red section is the month's outgoings. The green section is the gross profit, and where the graph drops below the baseline, the company made a loss.

Sheet is also useful to make 'what if' decisions. You can assess the long term advantages of buying a new piece of equipment, or estimate the effect of seasonal variations in trade.

A better manager?

Finally, your Psion can not only help you with coping with the financial side of your company, but it can also improve your management skills by giving you access to relevant e-texts, several of which have been written on management subjects. A selection formatted especially for the Psion are available from *www.pocketmanager.com* with some of their recent titles being dedicated to marketing and time management. These can be downloaded for a small fee.

References

Contact managers

RMR Contact - *www.rmrsoft.com*, shareware, £20
nOrganiser - *www.neuon.com*, shareware, £10

Time managers

Facilities Manager - *www.bainb.co.uk*, shareware, £15
Vactrac - *www.rmrsoft.com*, shareware, £10

Expense managers

Expense Manager/Expense Reporter - *www.palmtopsoftware.com*, commercial, £47
RMRCar - *www.rmrsoft.com*, shareware, £10

Invoicing and accounts

Money - *www.palmtopsoftware.com*, commercial, £47
Company Accounting - *www.pocketiq.com*, shareware, £17

E-texts

Pocket Manager - *www.pocketmanager.com*, commercial, $10 each

Genealogy on the GO

Donald Chapman looks at using a Psion to help trace your family tree

Genealogy, or the study of family histories, is becoming increasingly popular, particularly with the appearance of so many computer-based aids. It can be quite compelling to track through libraries and records departments in search of a missing link in your family tree, with computers and the Internet now becoming an integral part of the modern hobbyist-genealogist's toolkit.

Keeping records

Because a large part of genealogy involves visiting remote locations and taking notes, a Psion is the perfect companion. Even without the aid of any Psion-specific genealogy software, it's ideal for taking free-form notes that, unlike paper jottings, won't need to be transcribed when you get back home. With almost all genealogy work ultimately being maintained with desktop computer-based software, you can copy across all your Psion notes for pasting into your desktop genealogy program as necessary. With a Series 5, you can even dictate notes directly with the Record application.

Psion genealogy software

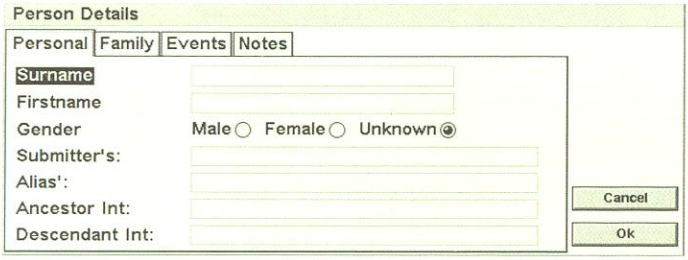
Apart from the obvious note-taking capabilities, there are a few genealogy programs available that run directly on your EPOC palmtop.

AGeneDB

AGeneDB is the pre-release version of a genealogy database program. Unfortunately, development of the software stopped more than a year ago, with the author citing lack of time to complete the project. You can still download the program from *www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Bay/8826/index.html*, where the program author provides a helpful list of the current version's limitations, and invites other programmers to take over program development or offer assistance to get the process moving again.

The program is basically functional in its current state, though some features are not implemented and import/export of data in Gedcom format doesn't work fully. AGeneDB doesn't work on the Revo.

If you want a simple means to take structured genealogy notes, or even if you want to create a family tree database from



Unfinished, but worth a look—AGeneDB

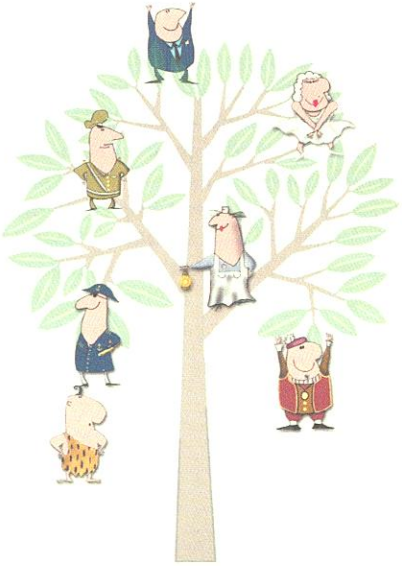
scratch, AGeneDB has enough functionality to make it worth a look, and costs nothing to try out. If you want a fully-featured program with working Gedcom support, however, you'll need Gen5, below.

Gen5

Originally available only in French, recent versions of Gen5 can be downloaded from *perso.wanadoo.fr/michel.catton* in French, English and German. Shareware, priced at £15, the registered version of Gen5 will handle thousands of family members and import/export Gedcom files quite happily. A new version of Gen5 is also available to run on the Revo.

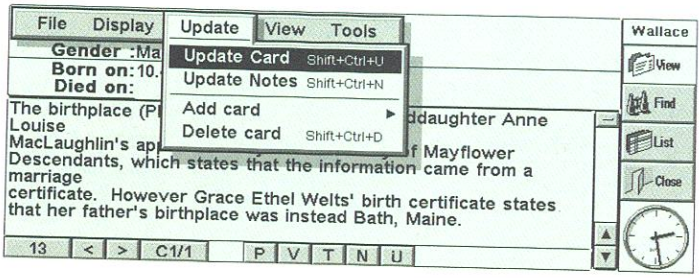
Gen5 is supplied with good online help and documentation in Microsoft Word format, and the program is generally very well polished. It supports all the fields you'd expect, to allow entry of names, gender, birth/death dates and locations, denomination, baptism, burial and occupational details, plus general notes of up to 1000 characters per entry.

As well as its main 'card' view, Gen5 offers a 'Family tree' view showing a graphical display of the currently selected person plus their spouse and the previous three generations. There's also a 'View descendants' option, giving a rudimentary hierarchical

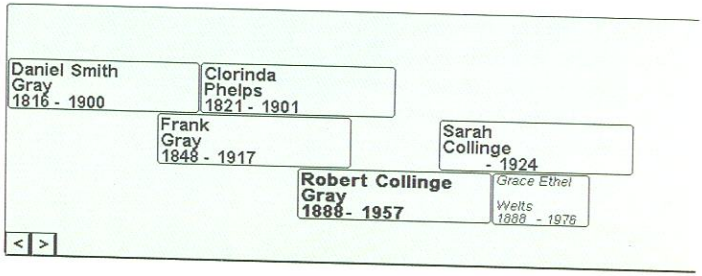


Gedcom?

Gedcom is a simple standard file format used to import and export genealogy database files between dissimilar programs, usually running on different computers. Although a useful means of exchanging family tree data, it's important to note that the current version of the standard (5.5) doesn't transfer certain data—most notably graphical images that may be stored on a desktop computer genealogy program.



Lots of power and flexibility with Gen5

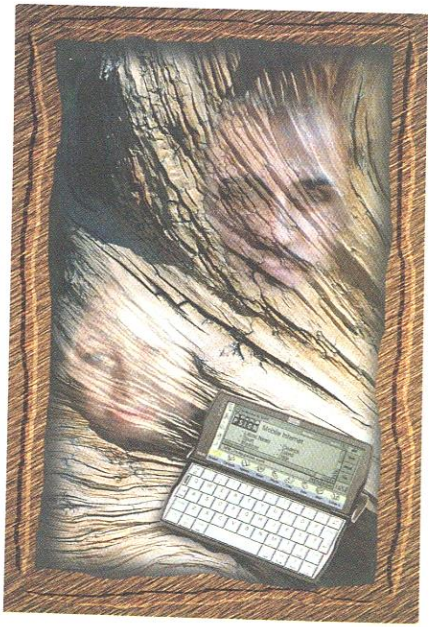


A useful graphical display in Gen5's 'tree' view

list of the first 60 descendants belonging to the next four generations. If you're serious about keeping genealogical data on your Psion then you should unquestionably take a look at Gen5.

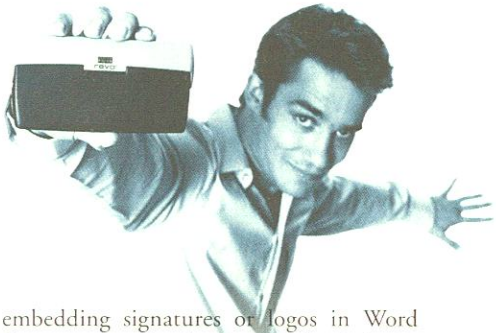
Parish Finder 5

Only of use within the UK, the freeware Parish Finder 5 is a simple database-style program for finding all parishes within a specified radius of a given location. After prompting for the name of the primary parish, the program then displays all those that meet the search criteria, together with map grid references and distances. You can download the program from *pdacentral.bhnet.com.br/psionking/genealogy5.htm*. Parish Finder 5 doesn't currently work on the Revo.



revo

Steve Litchfield focusses on a few applications that every new Revo owner should look into...

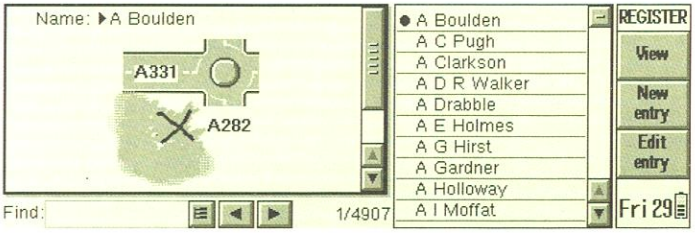


In issue 29's 'Maximising the Revo', we looked at ways of adding applications and utilities to bring the Revo up to a similar software specification to its bigger brother, the Series 5mx. It may be, though, that you've only ever owned a Revo and are not sure what you might be missing in the first place.

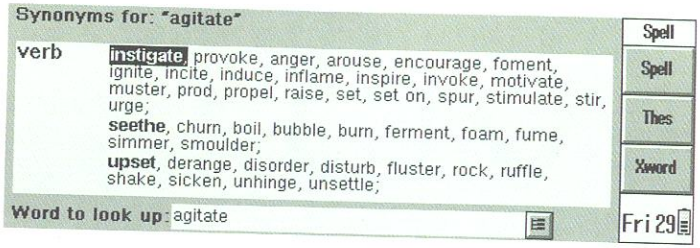
As you'll have noted from recent Newsreel announcements and from our Revo Plus review (see page 21), **Sketch** (another original Psion application) is now freely available and well worth installing. It really is an absolute essential, given the number of uses to which ER5 puts Sketch and its objects, from jotting down quick maps to embedding signatures or logos in Word documents, to displaying downloaded reference files correctly. You can download it from *www.epocware.com/sketch.html* .

Four programs in one?

Another original Psion program is **Spell**. We made brief reference to it in issue 29's article, but there seems to be a degree of confusion as to exactly what it can do and where to find it. Most obviously, it adds a new 'Spell check' command to Word, but you can also launch it separately from the Extras bar. When started in this mode, words can be entered and checked individually, by typing them into the 'look up' line.



A Sketch object put to good use inside a Data file


Synonyms for: "agitate"
verb
instigate, provoke, anger, arouse, encourage, foment, ignite, incite, induce, inflame, inspire, invoke, motivate, muster, prod, propel, raise, set, set on, spur, stimulate, stir, urge;
seethe, churn, boil, bubble, burn, ferment, foam, fume, simmer, smoulder;
upset, derange, disorder, disturb, fluster, rock, ruffle, shake, sicken, unhinge, unsettle;
Word to look up: agitate
Spell
Spell
Thes
Xword
Fri 29

Looking up synonyms in Spell's Thesaurus mode

Even more usefully, there's a comprehensive built-in thesaurus as well: with any word selected, tap on the 'Thes' toolbar button to bring up a long, categorised list of synonyms, invaluable when trying to avoid repeating yourself in a long letter or report. For TV quiz fans, the 'Anagram' command (on the 'Tools' menu) attempts to make as many words as possible out of the letters in your selection, and for crossword fans the 'Crossword' menu command will solve clues of the form "comp***r". Whatever use you find for Spell, you'll not regret the 800K of memory it takes up. You'll find the installation file 'spell.sis' in the 'Extras\Spell' folder on the PsiWin CD, in six different language versions.

Who needs Web?

Although you'll almost certainly try out either **Web** (supplied on the PsiWin CD) or **Opera** (on the Revo Plus CD, or available as shareware) at some stage, just to see what web browsing is like on a computer with a 12cm/5″ screen, I suspect you'll find it a frustrating experience. Given that your mobile web browsing will almost certainly be limited to occasional forays into news, travel, sport and shopping, you're far better off sticking to WAP and Psion's own **WAP browser**. We covered the technology behind WAP in issue 29, but essentially it's a cut-down, largely text-only, hypertext system that avoids all the bloat now afflicting many web sites. In fact, it's so effective and efficient that pages rarely take more than a second or so to appear, even over a slow GSM mobile phone connection.

Although much of the world seems set on using mobile phones to access the goldmine of information on the WAP section of the Internet, as a Revo owner you're in a far better position to take advantage. Not only do you have a larger and clearer screen, meaning less scrolling and less squinting, but you have a full and usable keyboard. Armed with a few, well chosen bookmarks (see 'WAP essentials' opposite), you can log onto the Internet, check the national headlines, read a story or two, check a share price, look up a local cinema film time and place an order for a CD using your credit card. All in less than 10 minutes, over a slow mobile phone connection. Psion's WAP browser is extremely robust and well-implemented and, importantly, it's easy to navigate through a set of your own bookmarks, avoiding the need to type and retype long WAP addresses.

If you've got a new Revo Plus, you'll find the WAP browser as one of the install options on the PsiWin CD. If you've got the original Revo, you'll need to buy it separately, from *www.psion.com/wap* . It's worth it, though, and you should soon save the purchase price in reduced online costs.

WAP essentials

Because WAP is still very new, the number of worthwhile sites to visit probably amounts to fewer than 100, compared to tens of thousands on the World Wide Web. Don't confuse low numbers with low quality though, as the type of information already available is almost exactly what most of us want to read.

While testing the Revo Plus, I took a tour round the world of WAP, and here are some of the gems (mostly UK-biased) that you may want to visit and bookmark:

PsionWAP: *wap.psion.com*

The home page for Psion's WAP browser by default, this is a good mix of news, sport, travel, etc., powered by Psion's Trivanti joint venture.

Ananova: *wap.ananova.com*

A comprehensive mix of news, weather, paper headlines, sports updates and TV listings, this is a good alternative to PsionWAP.

FT mobile: *wap.ft.com*

All the main threads of the financial world, as reported on by the Financial times. There's even an SMS alert service for those occasions where you have to know what's going on as soon as possible.

Genie UK: *wap.genie.co.uk*

Probably the biggest WAP portal in the world. Every aspect of life is represented here and you're sure to find quite a bit of interest.

People's Poll: *wap.peoples-poll.co.uk/wap*

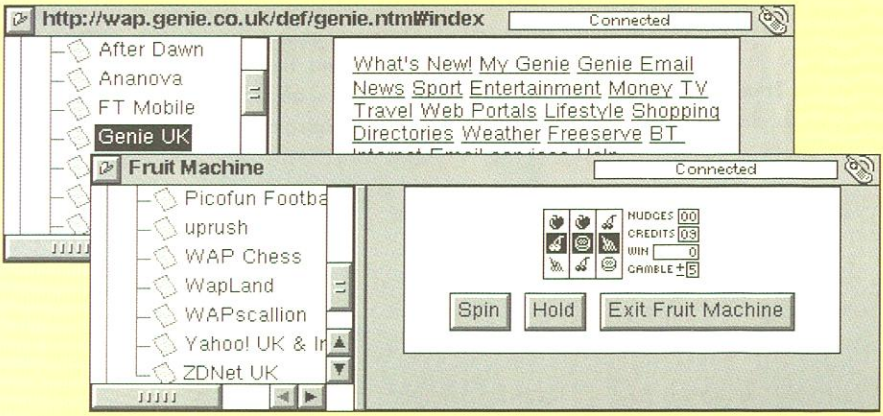
If you're a fan of talk radio, you'll love this. Take part in a variety of electronic straw polls and see how the nation is thinking.

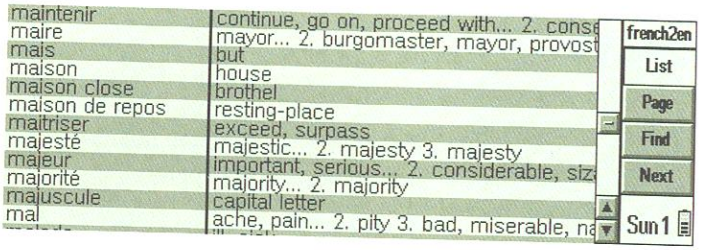
Wapland: *wap.wapland.com*

A news site about WAP itself—what's new and what's happening. A good way to keep your finger on the pulse.

WAPscallion: *wap.wapscallion.net*

Although I don't advise you to try WAP games unless you've got paid phone time to burn, this is one of the better ones, featuring adventure, card and casino games.





French to English in a TomeRaider compressed database

Parlez-vous?

With its tiny size, you'll be tempted to make the Revo your constant travelling companion, making it ideal for storing reference information—the sort of thing you used to carry pocket books for. Languages and tourist guides are a prime candidate for electronic replacement. PalmTop Software's **Collins English-French** (or German or Italian or Spanish) two-way dictionaries are perhaps your best option, combining a good word lookup facility with useful example phrases and usage. With the dictionaries taking up several megabytes each, you'll want to only install the 'direction' (e.g. German-to-English) you need for a particular trip, unless you own a Revo Plus. See *www.palmtopsoftware.com* .

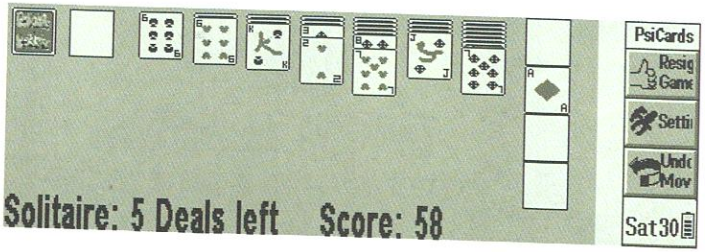
Adding compression

Another source of foreign language dictionary files (and a lot more) is the world of **TomeRaider**, which uses highly compressed databases to make it possible to carry around large reference files. Although you can 'roll your own' if you have large reference files that you've created yourself (e.g. medical or legal records), there's already a large amount of public domain information available in the TomeRaider format, such as bible versions and commentaries, movie information, dictionaries, travel guides and even encyclopaedias.

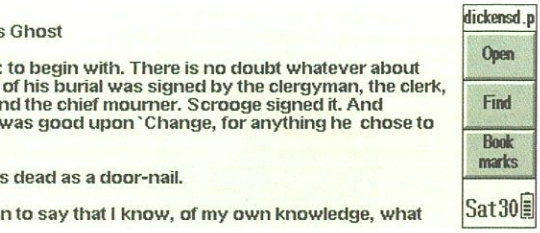
With the Revo's memory being especially precious, the use of intelligently compressed data such as this is all the more valuable. You can download the TomeRaider program and link through to example files at *www.tomeraider.com* .

Streets ahead

Also highly compressed are the street maps in **Street Planner Millennium**, oft-mentioned in the pages of Palmtop. Although at first you might dismiss this application, bear in mind that it's even more useful on a Revo, which is more likely to be in your pocket when travelling. With



PsiCards' Solitaire


Stave 1: Marley's Ghost
Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon `Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to.
Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.
Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what
dickensd.p
Open
Find
Book marks
Sat 30

Dickens on the Revo, in EBook

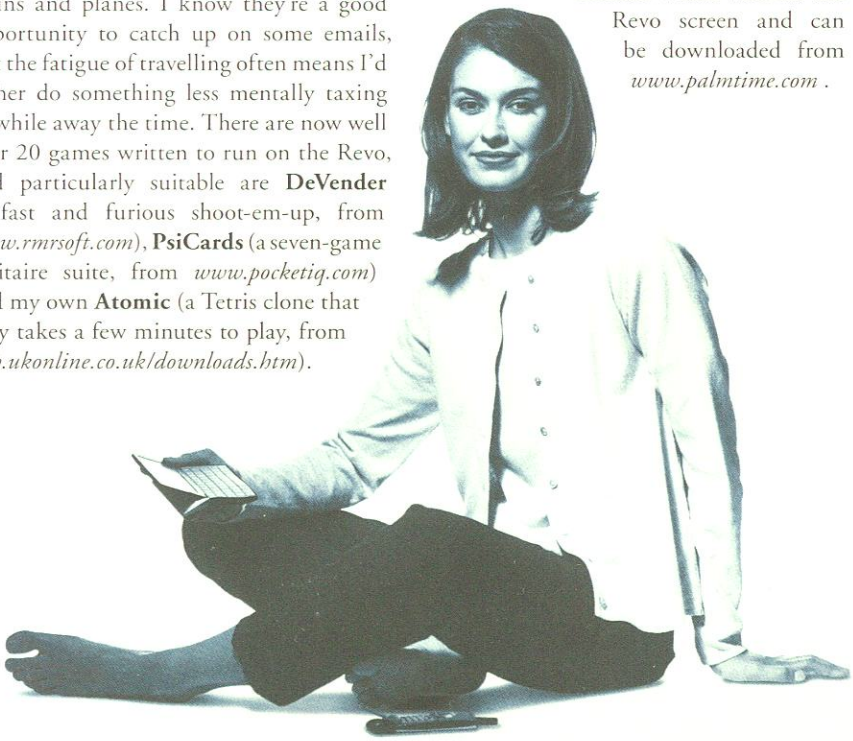
intelligent installation of only the cities you need (e.g. Inner London and two or three other towns and cities), Street Planner will use less than 2MB of memory. Again, see *www.palmtopsoftware.com* .

All work and no play

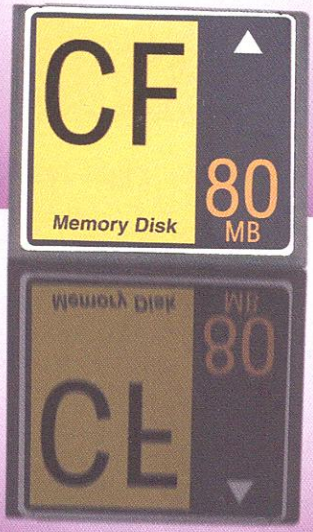
The worst part of travelling for me is the hours of hanging around, waiting for buses, trains and planes. I know they're a good opportunity to catch up on some emails, but the fatigue of travelling often means I'd rather do something less mentally taxing to while away the time. There are now well over 20 games written to run on the Revo, and particularly suitable are **DeVender** (a fast and furious shoot-em-up, from *www.rmrsoft.com*), **PsiCards** (a seven-game Solitaire suite, from *www.pocketiq.com*) and my own **Atomic** (a Tetris clone that only takes a few minutes to play, from *3lib.ukonline.co.uk/downloads.htm*).

Light reading

If games are not to your taste, make sure you take at least a good book along with you on your travels. You'll have seen our regular feature 'Worth a Read', which explores the wonderful world of electronic books. Again, these are almost always compressed, meaning that even large books only take up a fraction of a megabyte of memory. **EBook** works well on the Revo screen and can be downloaded from *www.palmtime.com* .



Win an 80MB CompactFlash!



1. **What helps keep an eye on Europa and Callisto?**
2. **Which member of the Palmtop team appears to have two hour lunch breaks?**
3. **Which useful accessory from P Starck costs £30?**

Expand the capacity of your computer by winning an 80MB CompactFlash!

Just answer the three questions above and send your answers on a postcard to Palmtop Publications, PO Box 188, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 6GP, ENGLAND.

We can only accept entries by postcard, and all postcards must be clearly labelled COMPETITION 31. Any entries received by means other than postcard will be discarded. Please include a contact telephone number on your postcard. Anyone posting multiple entries will be disqualified.

All entries must reach us by 30th November 2000. The decision of Palmtop Publications is final. Last issue's winner (from 14 correct entries) was Steve Nickless of London. *The correct answers were: 1. a Reversi/Othello clone, 2. The Probert Encyclopaedia, 3. The EPOC Gameboy emulator.*

Competition sponsored by Expansys Ltd.
Visit www.expansys.co.uk

Working with Word

In the third part of our series, we show you how to get the most from your Psion's powerful built-in word processor

by Steve Clack

In the last issue we looked at how to create a properly formatted letter from scratch, and how to set up a properly indented return address. In this instalment, we'll fill out the remainder of the letter and fine tune the formatting.

Open up!

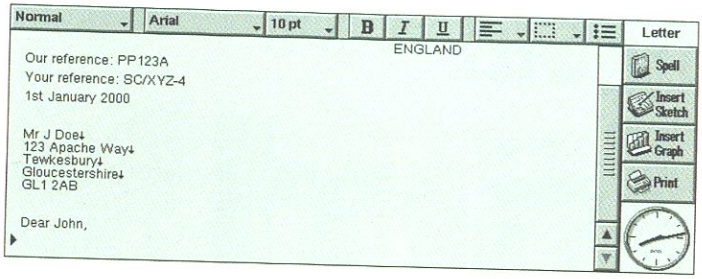
First off, open up the document you created last time around, ready to continue.

Having completed your own return address at the top right, you *could* define this indented format as a reusable 'Style', but in reality the text will remain exactly as-is for all future documents, and will become part of our template later on. As this particular indented format won't be of use anywhere else in the document, we won't define a style for it.

After the recipient address, you may wish to add one or two lines for 'Our reference:' and 'Your reference:', or just 'Reference:', which are commonly used to help keep track of business correspondence. Note that if you just press [Enter] to go to the next line after your return address, the next line will remain indented. To get back to the standard hard-left alignment, select 'Normal' again from the top left of the toolbar and your cursor will immediately jump to the left of the page, where it was when you first started the document.

Following the 'Reference:' line(s), press [Enter] once or twice to make a little space and start a brand new paragraph, then enter the date, which should be included in all correspondence. Some people like to indent this, in which case you can use the exact same technique as for the return address, with whatever indent setting you wish.

The next step (after another tap or two of the [Enter] key) is to add the recipient's address. This will of course be different for each letter (unless you correspond regularly with the same person), so just type in the name and address, pressing [Shift]+[Enter] at the end of each line to keep the paragraph together, as we did with the return



Ready to enter the body of our letter...

address. Next, press[Enter] once or twice more, and enter the salutation, such as "Dear John,".

Body text

The next step, of course, is to enter the body of the text. We'll be doing some more advanced formatting, including line and paragraph spacings, once we've done a test printout later on. For the time being, merely enter the body text of your letter, with a single [Enter] between each paragraph. To complete the letter, add whatever sign-off you prefer, together with your name, job title, etc. (see below).

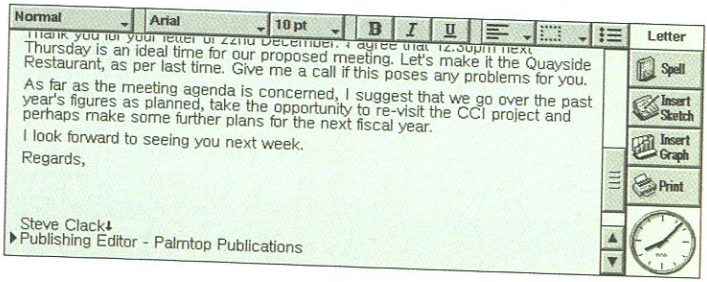
Formatting text

Having completed the text of the document, you may have noticed that we've made no use of 'Styles' so far, having applied specific formatting to individual sections as and when required. The 'Normal' style indicator has appeared at the top left of the toolbar throughout the document, indicating that all the text is based upon this basic style.

The way to understand document formatting and the use of styles is to think of two types of formatting:

1. If you want to apply on-the-fly formatting to individual characters, words or paragraphs then use the 'Text' or 'Paragraph' menus. If using emphases, such as bold, italic, or underline, select the entire block of text that you want to change, and either select the emphasis required from the 'Text' menu or use the buttons on the top toolbar. The changes will always apply only to the text you selected. If making changes that you want to apply to *entire* paragraphs, such as tabs, indents or alignment, then select the paragraphs that you want to change and then apply the changes from the 'Paragraph' menu or the top toolbar

The last text of the letter now complete


Normal
Arial
10 pt
Letter
Thursday is an ideal time for our proposed meeting. Let's make it the Quayside Restaurant, as per last time. Give me a call if this poses any problems for you.
As far as the meeting agenda is concerned, I suggest that we go over the past year's figures as planned, take the opportunity to re-visit the CCI project and perhaps make some further plans for the next fiscal year.
I look forward to seeing you next week.
Regards,
Steve Clack
Publishing Editor - Palmtop Publications
Spell
Insert Sketch
Insert Graph
Print

(where applicable). Note that it's only necessary to have the cursor covering *part* of the paragraph(s) that you want to change—if you're changing a single paragraph then the cursor merely needs to be placed somewhere within that paragraph.

2. If you want to make formatting changes that you'll be able to reuse, either in future documents or elsewhere in the current one, then consider using 'Styles'. These can be used to set all formatting attributes at once, including font size and type, line spacings, indents, tabs, alignment and so on. If you select a block of text and apply a predefined style to it, normally by selecting from the drop-down list on the top toolbar, then this will override any *ad hoc* formatting you previously applied using method '1' above.

Fine tuning

After completing this letter, we'll move onto a more complex document that illustrates and makes full use of styles. In the meantime, we'll perform a little fine tuning on the current letter.

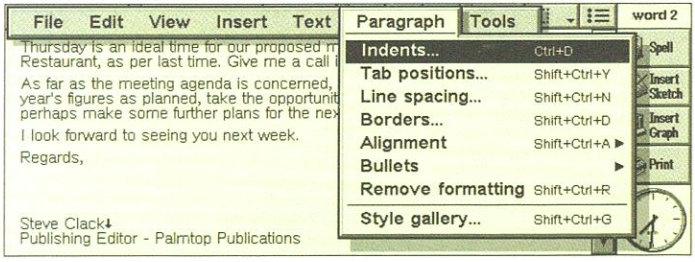
Because we've used the same font throughout the document and limited our formatting to a few simple indents, there are unlikely to be any major surprises when we come to print out a hard copy of the letter. Still, it's important to remember that the display on your Psion screen can't accurately represent such subtleties as line and paragraph spacings. To check these aspects of the formatting accurately, we'll need to print out a copy of the letter.

Having set up the printer type and page size in the last instalment, the only remaining steps needed are to connect the printer and select the 'Print' menu command. Once the page has printed, examine it to check that you're happy with the overall look.

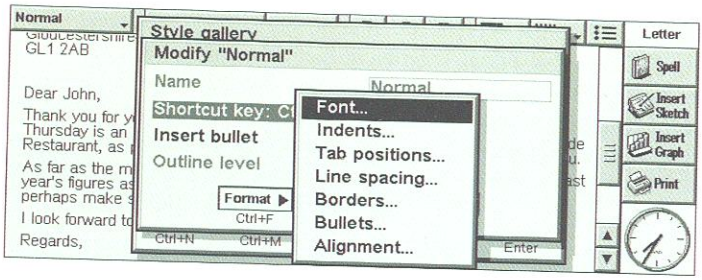
The first thing to check is the indents. If you find that your return address is too far over to the right (or not far enough) then go back into the document, select that part of the text and alter the indent setting by an appropriate amount.

Font changes

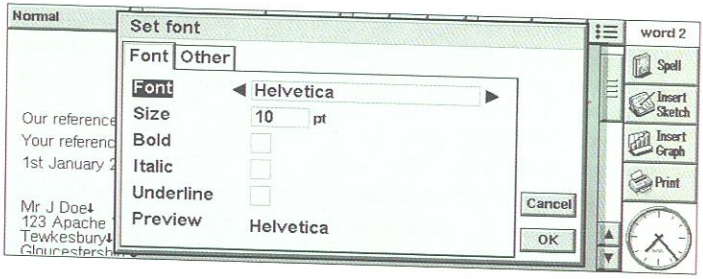
If you're unhappy with the typeface or type size, you can change it. Because we've based the entire text on the 'Normal' style, the best way to do this is to use the Style gallery. Without having to select any text in the document go to 'Paragraph | Style gallery...' and select the 'Normal' style from the list. Then use [Ctrl]+[M] to select 'Modify', and [Ctrl]+[F] to select 'Format' from the subsequent dialog. Select 'Font' from the



Using the 'Paragraph' menu to make on-the-fly formatting changes



Selecting formatting options from within the Style gallery



Making global font adjustments at a stroke

resulting list, then change the 'Font' and 'Size' from the next dialog. Press [Enter] twice to close the last two dialogs, then once again to 'Apply' the style changes.

Line and paragraph spacings

Similarly, you can change the spacing between paragraphs, or the spaces between the individual lines within each paragraph. These are controlled from within the 'Line spacing...' dialog, accessed from the 'Style gallery...' menu command as above—just select 'Line spacing...' instead of 'Font' from the list. Once in the dialog, use the 'Line spacing' option to set the space between lines *within* each paragraph. Remember that in places where we used [Shift]+[Enter] in the document to keep lines together, such as in the addresses, these will also be affected by this setting.

To adjust the space that appears *between* each paragraph, change the 'Space below' setting from the same dialog. As with the line spacing option, this will of course affect all paragraphs in the document. If you want to make any of the above changes to specific paragraphs only, use the 'Text' and 'Paragraph' menus as described earlier.

Once you've tweaked all these settings to get the document looking as you want it, save it ready for next time. In the following instalment we'll prepare the document to be saved as a reusable template, then start work on a slightly more ambitious project...

Choosing a Psion

Steve Clack offers some advice on choosing which Psion model (or other EPOC compatible) to buy

By the very fact that you're reading Palmtop magazine now, the chances are you already own some kind of Psion or Psion-compatible computer, but you may well be considering an upgrade, or perhaps planning to buy one for a spouse or family member, or even a second machine for yourself. You may also have a friend or colleague who's looking at the palmtop market, in which case you may like to show them this article. Over the next few pages we'll focus on the differences between the various models, and attempt to steer the potential purchaser in the right direction.

Be assured that there's no holy grail of the 'best' EPOC model to buy. All of the current alternatives represent a compromise between power, usability, portability and price—the more you pay the more you get, but the harder it is to carry around.

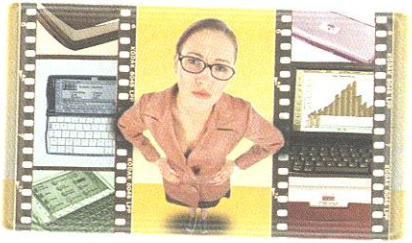
What do YOU do?

Before even thinking of which model to buy, consider what you'll want to use the computer for. If you're 'trading up' from a basic electronic or paper-based organiser, you may want to start with the most basic (and portable) EPOC option, the Psion Revo. If you're downscaling from a laptop computer and/or you do lots of text entry, you may wish to consider the Series 7 or netBook. If you want something pocketable but plan to add route planning software, translation dictionaries and large reference works, the expandable Series 5mx or Ericsson MC218 may be your best bet.

Memory considerations

One overrriding concern when purchasing a palmtop is that you don't run out of memory (the space used to run programs and store files). This limitation only exists on the Revo models, which have no capacity for expansion. If you buy any of the other current EPOC models they'll come with at least a single CompactFlash slot, which you can use to add almost unlimited extra storage.

So if you're considering a Revo, how much is enough? It's safe to say that if you're using it mostly for 'organiser' functions such as Agenda (diary) and Contacts (address book) then the 8MB model will give ample space. Even for modest email use and a selection of word processed documents, spreadsheets, etc., you're unlikely to run out of space, even with a small selection of add-on programs. The real memory hogs are large data files, such as dictionaries, some of the TomeRaider reference works, larger ebooks, travel guides, movie guides, etc. Programs such as mapping/route planning can also take up large chunks of space for all but the most minimal installation.



Their shortage of memory is compounded by the fact that some of the software included with the Revo is not part of the built in ROM, but must be installed separately. For example, the optional spelling checker takes around 800K of memory, the Psion Web browser takes another 800K, and the new Opera web browser included with the Revo Plus takes 1.6MB of space. Even the WAP browser for the Revo Plus takes 500K of your precious memory.

It's important to be aware that whichever model you choose, not all of the built-in memory is available for storing programs. With an 8MB Revo there's less than 7MB available on a brand new machine with no software loaded. Even a 16MB Revo with Opera and the WAP browser installed will only have about 12MB free. As well as being used to store files, at least part of the remaining space is needed as 'working' memory—the more programs and files you have open at a given time, the more space you'll need. As a *very* general rule of thumb, allow at least 2-3 megabytes for working memory, though if you're frugal with which programs you keep running it's possible to get away with less. If you want to keep 30 or 40 programs open and running simultaneously (not as unrealistic as it may sound) you'll need to allow much more.

If you think you might 'outgrow' the 8MB Revo quickly, consider paying the extra for the 16MB model, even if you have no need for its bundled WAP browser or Opera.

If you've got designs on adding *lots* of extra software to your Psion, then think carefully. If they include many big reference works then you may have to go for the CompactFlash-expandable Series 5mx rather than the Revo. If you already know some of the software titles you're planning to add, find out roughly how much space they're likely to take first.

Hardware reviews in Palmtop

Here's a summary of our main hardware reviews covering the current range of Psion computers and compatibles:

Psion Revo - full review in issue 26

Psion Revo Plus - full review in this issue

Psion Series 5mx - full review in issue 24

Series 7 / netBook - full review in issue 25, follow-up feature in issue 27

Ericsson MC218 - full review in issue 24, follow-up feature in issue 26

Oregon Osaris - full review in issue 24, follow-up feature in issue 26

If you're looking for product specifications, see our model table on pages 114-115

Hardware considerations

Of course, there are many other reasons for choosing one model over another, aside from expandability:

Cost

The overriding factor for many users. The Revo is of course the lowest-cost option from Psion, but you might also wish to consider the Ericsson MC218 (essentially a 5mx clone—see our review in issue 24) or the Oregon Scientific Osaris (also in issue 24), both of which are currently available at discounted prices.

The non-standard screen size of the Osaris means that most third party software won't currently run on it, and the general build quality reflects its budget price, but if you're looking for a cheap EPOC machine with CompactFlash slot expansion then it may be worth a look.

Another possibility for those on a budget is to consider a used machine. See our article 'Any old iron?' in issue 24 for some useful guidance on buying palmtop computers second-hand. If you prefer to buy your used equipment with some kind of warranty, check out POS Ltd or PsionEx, both of whom advertise regularly in Palmtop.

Keyboard

As the primary means of interfacing with your computer, it's important to pick a model with an appropriate keyboard. If you plan to enter a lot of information directly into your Psion then be sure to try out the model you plan to buy before making a final decision. The Revo keyboard is better than many, but still too cramped for large amounts of text entry. If you've got designs on writing a thesis or creating long business reports on the move, consider a Series 5mx

or compatible as a minimum requirement. The keyboard on the Series 7/netBook is big enough to be able to touch type at high speed, unless you have particularly big hands, and is of excellent quality with plenty of vertical travel on the keys, which makes it feel particularly responsive.

Screen

At least as important as the keyboard, it's vital to buy a palmtop with a screen that you're comfortable with. It's a very personal choice and will depend upon both the quality of your own eyesight and the kind of lighting conditions you normally expect to be working in. As with the keyboard, there's no substitute for trying things out in a shop first, but here are a few pointers:

- The Revo screen is relatively small, but has the best contrast of any of the monochrome EPOC devices. If you plan to use a Revo in very dim lighting then forget it—there's no backlight, making this impossible.

► Although physically a little larger and with double the number of pixels (640x240 rather than the 480x160 of the Revo), the poor contrast of the Series 5/5mx screen is a topic of some controversy. There's no question that it's poor by modern standards, but some users appear quite happy with it, whereas others find it virtually unusable. The screen is in fact quite good if viewed in bright daylight, but is probably at its worst in a poorly lit room during daylight hours. With its switchable backlight, the screen becomes excellent as the lighting level drops further, and becomes very easy to read in a typical night-time domestic environment, in a room lit only by low-wattage incandescent bulbs. In total darkness all keyboard-based devices become almost unusable of course, as you can't see to use the keyboard.

► The colour screens of the Series 7 and netBook offer the best all-round legi-

bility across a broad range of lighting conditions, and at 640x480 pixels and a 7 inch/175mm (diagonal) screen size, you'll see correspondingly more lines of text, spreadsheet rows, etc. at a time. As with any colour LCD device though, the screen darkens into illegible blackness when viewed outdoors in bright sunlight.

Batteries

Replacing alkaline batteries can become quite expensive if you use your palmtop extensively. The Series 5mx and compatibles (including the Oregon Osaris) are the only models without built-in rechargeables. You can expect battery life to be as low as 10 hours or less if you use the backlight most of the time, and no more than 20-25 with only occasional backlight use. One advantage of AA batteries is that they're readily available throughout the world, and you're unlikely to be caught short without a means to power your palmtop.

The rechargeable batteries inside the Revo (and Revo Plus) will run for around 10 hours between charges, so you may need to keep your charger to hand on long journeys. The Series 7/netBook battery also lasts around 10 hours between charges, but if you travel regularly on long journeys without mains power then you can buy one or more replaceable battery packs, which can be exchanged in a few seconds.

Other features

There are certain other hardware and software features that are specific to one or more models in the EPOC range:

- Voice recording. Not to be confused with MP3 music playing capabilities, the Series 5mx and Series 7/netBook have the facility to record short dictated notes (taking around half a megabyte of disk space per minute of recording time) with perfectly intelligible sound quality. This feature isn't present on the Revo models, which have no built-in microphone.
- Revos can only be connected to an external device via infrared or their supplied docking station, whereas other models have an RS232 serial port that can be attached to a desktop computer or serial printer via the cable supplied with the EPOC device. If you need to connect to a printer via a parallel adaptor cable (sold separately), note that you can't do this with a Revo.
- The Series 7 and netBook have a PC Card slot in addition to a CompactFlash slot. This can be used to add a second CF card (via a suitable adaptor), a PC Card storage device, modem or external VGA card (see page 29). With the netBook, you can even add an Ethernet network card. Note that the CF slot in these two models is of the thicker 'Type II' variety, which means you can use high capacity storage solutions such as the IBM 340MB CF hard disk drive (reviewed in issue 28). Similar cards with capacities up to 1GB will be available shortly, though such large storage requirements are virtually unheard of for software on an EPOC device.
- With the recent availability of Sketch and Program for the Revo, there are very few 'absolute' differences between the software in current EPOC models. However, not all software has yet been adapted to work with the smaller Revo screen, and some programs will not run full-screen (or in colour) on the

Series 7 and netBook. If there are any specific add-on programs that are likely to be central to your Psion usage then check compatibility with the software vendor first.

Portability

Although they now all run virtually the same software, the current range of EPOC models covers quite a broad range of sizes and weights, with the Series 7 and netBook too large even to be classed as palmtops. If you want true pocketability then the Revo is the ideal choice, with the larger 5mx more suited to carrying in a briefcase or handbag.

At just over 1kg in weight, the Series 7 and netBook models can be classed more as alternatives to laptop computers, though their relatively long battery life and sub-notebook size make them far more practical as a travelling companion.

Speed

Although the processor speeds vary widely on paper, there's surprisingly little to choose between the models when it comes down to practical use. The Revos and 5mx all now run at 37MHz, with the Series 7 at 130MHz and the netBook at 190MHz. Although this does make these sub-notebook models noticeably faster, most EPOC applications run quite swiftly anyway.

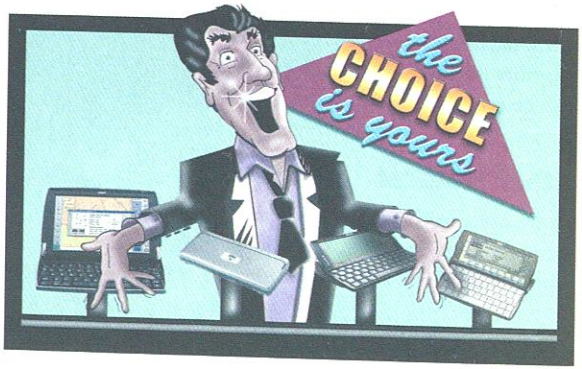
Series 7 or netBook?

Finally, the Series 7 and netBook are so similar that a summary of the important differences is order:

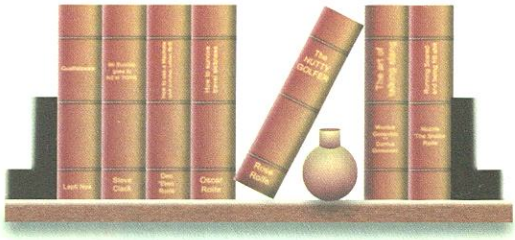
- The Series 7 comes with 16MB of memory, whereas the netBook has 32MB. However, because the operating system of the netBook is loaded into memory at startup, it only has around 6MB more usable RAM than the Series 7.
- The Series 7 memory can be upgraded to 32MB, whereas the netBook can be upgraded to 64MB. See our feature 'Upgrade your Series 7 or netBook' in issue 30 for full details.
- The netBook has a 190MHz processor, compared to 130MHz in the Series 7. This makes it almost 50% faster.

Durability

Although all models are designed to withstand 'normal' usage, the Series 7 and netBook have been specifically ruggedised, with the specifications claiming that they are designed to withstand being dropped onto a wooden floor from a height of one metre.



Worth a Read



John Woodthorpe continues our series looking at the world of electronic books

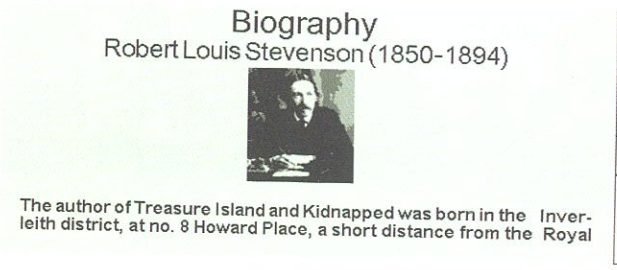
A new ebook reader application has appeared since our brief list in issue 30 and, although it's still a beta version, looks very promising. Called the MobiPocket Reader, it's the latest addition to the range of readers by MobiPocket, who produce similar Palm and Windows CE offerings. All three versions read Palm DOC format files, which gives you access to a huge stock of converted texts, some of which are also on the MobiPocket web site (*www.mobipocket.com*), along with the reader itself. So far, all the texts available there are out of copyright and free to download, although you have to register in order to do this. There's also a unique identification code generated when running the reader on a specific machine, implying that at some point MobiPocket will also be selling commercial ebooks and tying them to a particular machine in an attempt to control the distribution process.

As with any site requiring registration, it's worth reading their privacy policy first. In fact, this is the only place where they tell you that isn't possible to register unless you have cookies turned on in your web browser. Fortunately, the reader can be downloaded without registration and most of the texts can also be found at good etext sources such as Memoware (*www.memoware.com*), who don't require you to hand out your personal details.

It's still worth keeping an eye on the MobiPocket site though, as their reader has the potential to outclass all the others—they have a few tricks up their sleeve, especially with files that are tuned to their own reader software.

As an illustration of this, the first book I opened after installing the reader was a copy of Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War', which turned out to have an illustrated cover. Some of the others also have illustrated biography sections at the end, making them feel more like 'real' books.

Another unique feature is being able to arrange text in two columns as well as the normal single column layout. This takes a little getting used to but works particularly well on the larger screen of the netBook and Series 7, where it reduces the amount of


Biography
Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)
The author of Treasure Island and Kidnapped was born in the Inver-
leith district, at no. 8 Howard Place, a short distance from the Royal
New Arabia
Pg. 932

Images as well as text, with the new MobiPocket Reader

scanning your eyes have to do. It's also handy on the Series 5 screen at times, but not a lot of use when you get down to the size of the Revo, where things can look very crowded.

One oddity is that the font sizes chosen seem a little too large. There's an impressive range available from the zoom buttons, but they start off fairly large and get even bigger. I'd like to see the range shifted a little and a facility for controlling the justification of the text. At the moment it seems to stay fully justified, which I find a little tiring to read after a while.

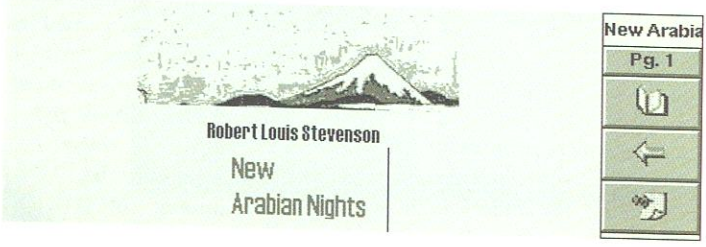
Overall, there are currently a few other rough edges to the software, but hopefully future versions will address those points. It's definitely a useful addition to the growing range of EPOC ebook readers and a commendable first offering from the people at MobiPocket.

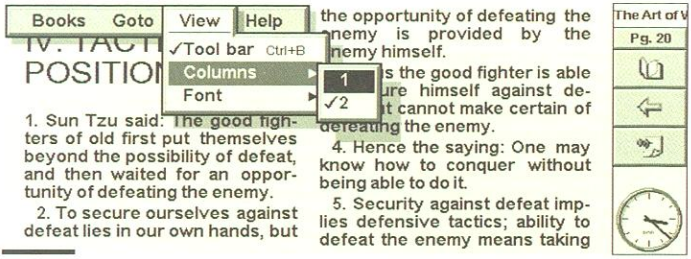
The Open eBook Forum

One of the features of both TomeRaider and MobiPocket is their ability to use hyperlinks to jump to a related section of a text. Generally, this is used more widely and more effectively in MobiPocket, to the extent that some of the books they provide feel very much like web pages. Loading one of them into another reader, such as EBook or VReader5, even shows what look like compressed HTML tags, i.e. plain text HTML compressed into the Palm DOC format to save space.

Strictly speaking, these conform to the Open eBook (OEB) format, which looks to be the way that electronics texts will be going in the future. MobiPocket is the first reader for EPOC to support it, as well as dealing with the more conventional DOC files based on simple text. The OEB aim is to create a format for reading ebooks that builds on HTML by adding extra features to allow text providers to make the book more attractive and easy to read without

A graphically enhanced cover page—running MobiPocket on the Revo




Books Goto View Help
✓Tool bar Ctrl+B
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1
✓2
IV. TACT
POSITIO
1. Sun Tzu said: The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.
2. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but
the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.
s the good fighter is able ure himself against de- t cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.
4. Hence the saying: One may know how to conquer without being able to do it.
5. Security against defeat implies defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy means taking
The Art of V
Pg. 20

Only MobiPocket can display two columns

locking it in to a particular hardware or software platform.

If you want to learn more about this, the OEB specifications and a series of examples are all at *www.openebook.org*, along with further information on the project and the companies that are supporting it.

As well as distributing files in compressed OEB format, MobiPocket are encouraging the submission of ebooks by making available the tools and information to allow Windows PC users to contribute non-copyright texts for the library to distribute free of charge. This is an excellent idea and seems to be gathering pace as Palm and Windows CE users share in the work. Now that there's an EPOC reader, we have a chance to contribute as well, so if you have the time and interest, do give it a go. You'll find the details at *www.mobipocket.com/en/eBooks/Contribution.asp*, along with links to the software needed. There aren't many projects where users of the three main palmtop computer platforms can all collaborate, and this one looks to have a lot of potential.

PSIMON & PSION.
STAFF NOTICE BOARD
CHECK OUT PALMTOP ISSUE 31. COVERAGE OF REVO PLUS.
EXIT
SMOKING
I ♥ PETE
SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING WHEN IT COMES TO THE REVO PLUS, EVEN THE GIRLS IN THE OFFICE AGREED.

Hot tips for hot games

In this ongoing series, we invite a game author to share some winning tips and strategies

Psi-Jong by Ben Vaughan

Psi-Jong will be familiar to many as it is similar to the much-loved classic 'Shanghai', with the advantage that you can select tiles simply by touching them with your stylus (or finger). At first glance, it seems to be simply a matter of finding matching pairs of tiles and removing them from the pile until they are all gone, or until no more moves are possible. But there's more to it than that, as you will see.

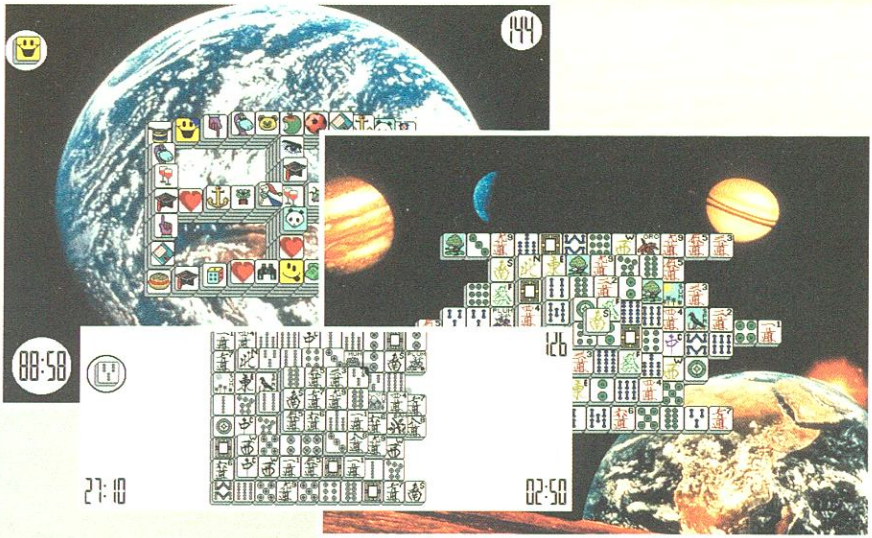
In brief, there are initially 144 tiles placed in the layout that you select. The first challenge is to remove as many of them as possible, and until you manage to remove all the tiles, a record of the most tiles removed for each level and layout will be stored, so that you (or whoever else plays) can try to beat this. Once a level has been completed, the time taken is stored, giving you something else to beat. On the layouts marked 'Easy', a tile is 'free' to be removed as long as there are no tiles on top of it and at least one side does not adjoin a tile of equal height. On the layouts marked 'Hard', a tile is only 'free' to be removed if there are no tiles on top of it and at least one side to the left or right does not adjoin a tile of equal height. To remove a pair of tiles, each must be 'free' as described above.

On the 'Easy' levels, there is a fair chance that you will remove all the tiles without any thought to strategy. To increase your chances of success, seek to remove the highest tiles first. Better still, each time you remove a pair, choose the pair that will leave the most 'free' tiles for your next go. The more 'free' tiles available the greater the chance that you will be able to find a matching pair, or a number of pairs which will enable you to make a strategic choice, rather than just having to make the only move available.

- Some 'Easy' layouts are easier than others: 'Tower' is the easiest. Top priority here is to remove the central stacks. Then try to cut into the main slab to free up as many tiles as possible.
- On the 'Wall' layout, simply remove the highest tiles. This method will also work well with 'Maya (Easy)'.

Psi-Jong

Psi-Jong is available as shareware (at £12/$20) in versions for the Series 3 range, Series 5/5mx, Revo, Series 7/netBook and compatibles. A new Series 7 version has just been released with animated colour backgrounds. All versions can be downloaded from *www.bjv.btinternet.co.uk*



► On the 'Shao-Lin (Easy)' layout (see top left screen shot above) it is best to focus on removing tiles from the central cross.

When you start playing the 'Hard' levels you will need to put more thought into your moves if you are to succeed:

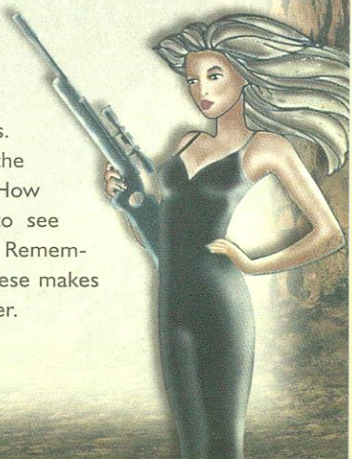
► When playing the 'Classic' layout (bottom right screen shot above), your first priority is to remove the top tile, the far left tile and the two far right tiles. These block access to many of the other tiles and if they are not removed quickly then you will have little chance of success. Try to find tiles to match these, even if they are not 'free', in which case try to find tiles that will enable you to free these tiles. If they are also not 'free', look for tiles to free those, and so on. Try to strike a balance between focussing on the widest horizontal lines and the highest stacks.

► When playing the 'Shao-Lin (Hard)' layout, focus on removing the three horizontal lines of tiles.

With the other layouts the same principles apply, but tailor your strategies to suit each layout. Half the fun is coming up with your own ideas on how to tackle each layout and then trying them out, but the following points are helpful to bear in mind:

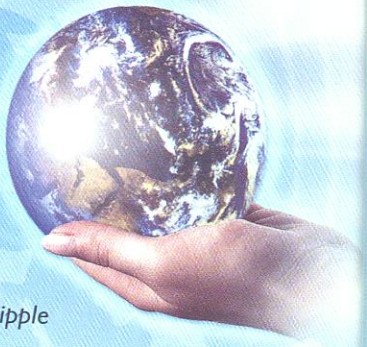
► If you can see all four of the same tiles 'free' at once, remove them immediately.

► Each tile set has two groups of four tiles—any one from a group can be matched with any other tile from the same group. Selecting 'How to play' from the menu will show you the two groups. If you change the tile set, select 'How to play' again to see the new groups. Remembering to use these makes playing a lot easier.



On the NET

Our regular look at what's happening online, and where to point your browser



by Pete Sipple

Red alert, or red herring...

PC viruses are always making the headlines and now the media are picking up on the potential threat of viruses to the new generation of mobile phones and PDAs. Although there are not any true viruses that affect EPOC as yet, the leading anti-virus software producers have announced that they will be releasing engines for WinCE, Palm and EPOC. For a summary of the closest thing to viruses for the Psion, go to *village.vossnet.co.uk/t/thecastl* and follow the link to 'Malware'. Meanwhile, watch out for the following 'mostly harmless' items:

- EPOC/Lights plays havoc with your backlight.
- EPOC/BadInfo messes with your owner information.
- EPOC/Alone shows you a bouncing ball.
- EPOC/Fake simulates a disk format.
- EPOC/Alarm.a 'boings' at you.
- EPOC/Ghost.a just insults you.

Again, from the newsgroups...

"If you look at the technical data on them they are not in circulation and are just really joke programs." (agendean@btinternet.com)

"Don't rest easy because these initial 'offerings' are only joke programs—mark my words, with the increasing use of EPOC, especially in mobile communications, the OS will be an irresistible target for virus programmers and more malicious variants are likely to make an appearance." (mlordblackadder@my-deja.com)

"The authors of most viruses are the same people who write the anti-virus software. Somebody has obviously spotted a 'gap in the market'."(condrman@yahoo.com)

Time to chat?

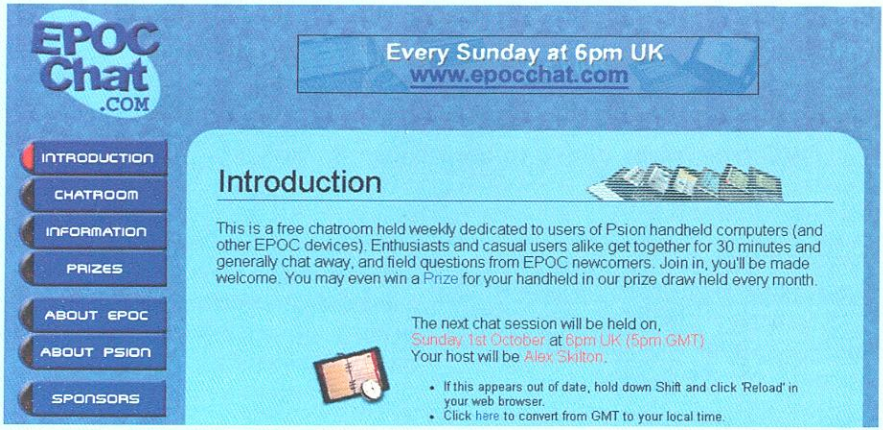
If you're at a loose end on a Sunday afternoon at 5pm GMT, come on over to *www.epocchat.com*. Chat live with other EPOC users and type in those questions that you've always wanted to ask. Chats last around 30 minutes and are on all things EPOC. You can subscribe to a mailing list for updates and try to win a weekly door prize. As it's off-peak Internet time for most of us, there's no excuse, although according to a posting in the Psion newsgroups, it does clash with UK showings of Star Trek...

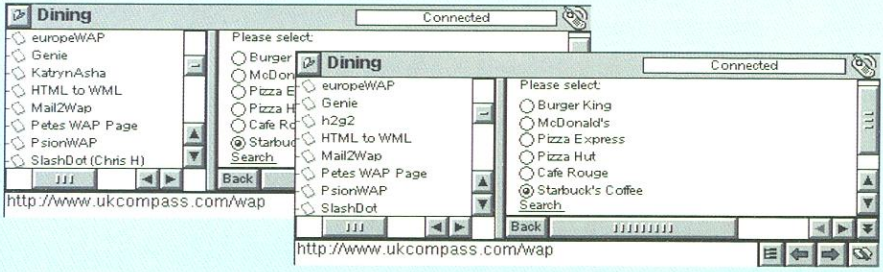
Worthy mentions

Three more top sites worth a look are:

Looking for links? - possibly the neatest looking list of Psion links can be found at *www.gojasper.com/Psion* .

Gratuitous nudity - why would anyone want to disassemble an expensive netBook and why are so many of us curious to


EPOC Chat .COM
Every Sunday at 6pm UK
www.epocchat.com
INTRODUCTION
CHATROOM
INFORMATION
PRIZES
ABOUT EPOC
ABOUT PSION
SPONSORS
Introduction
This is a free chatroom held weekly dedicated to users of Psion handheld computers (and other EPOC devices). Enthusiasts and casual users alike get together for 30 minutes and generally chat away, and field questions from EPOC newcomers. Join in, you'll be made welcome. You may even win a Prize for your handheld in our prize draw held every month.
The next chat session will be held on,
Sunday 1st October at 6pm UK (5pm GMT)
Your host will be Alex Skilton.
If this appears out of date, hold down Shift and click 'Reload' in your web browser.
Click here to convert from GMT to your local time.



see what goes on underneath the hood of our Psion devices. For the latest autopsy report, go to *www.epoccity.com/feature.php3* and follow the link to 'netBook stripped!'

Snippets - File Grabber is a new source of downloadable snippets with images, sounds and text files, ranging from a history of the telecoms industry and movie sound effects, to databases of phobias and the world's largest caves. There's currently a competition running, with the chance to win a state-of-the-ark Psion Organiser II. Get grabbing at *web.ukonline.co.uk/shaun.mcgill* .

WAP picks

If you've just acquired the new Psion Wap Browser, you may be looking for some places to explore. There's a good selection on page 77 of this issue, but here in On the Net we'll bring you a regular pick of the latest and best WAP sites. Here are two to get you started:

Billed as a 'mobile guide to the UK', you can locate shops, restaurants and attractions by entering in a UK town, postcode or grid reference at *www.ukcompass.com/wap* .

If you're looking for something specific, try one of the new WAP search engines springing up, such as *www.wapaw.com* or *www.wapmap.com* .

Hints & Tips

Every item published in this section wins the author TWO free issues added to their subscription!

Tappability in Time

I was delighted recently to find the following small features in the 'Map' view of the built-in Time application, both showing an impressive attention to detail:

- Tapping on the distance to a city from your home city causes the display to toggle between miles, nautical miles and kilometres.
- Tapping on the time next to either your home city or the selected city causes both clocks to toggle between an analogue and digital display.

Fred Ferguson, Cardiff

Exporting into Outlook Express

Although Contacts cannot normally be synchronized with Microsoft Outlook Express, there is a simple way to import and merge your Psion Contacts database with your Windows address book (which Outlook Express uses).

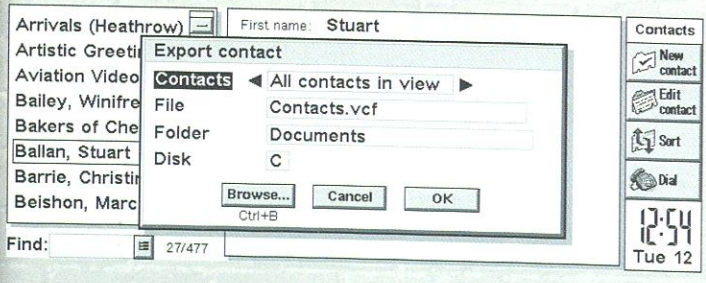
Export your entire Contacts file in *vCard* (.vcf) format and move the file across to your Windows desktop. Next, in Outlook Express, open the 'Address Book' and use 'Import | Business Card (vCard)', specifying the file you exported earlier.

Because the operation is a simple 'merge' rather than true synchronization, it's best left as an occasional or one-off exercise. Trying to import an updated Contacts export file at a later date would result in a large number of 'Yes, I want to update the contact' dialogs having to be acknowledged individually.

Rosemary Costello, Drogheda, IRELAND

Minute-perfect copies

It has always annoyed me that when copying and pasting entries in Agenda, the time details of the original are not preserved. For example, when copying an appointment starting at 9:15am, pasting it back in (using Agenda's Day view) will use the time settings for the current cursor position instead. So



Exporting from Contacts in vCard format

you end up with a new appointment at 2:00pm, for instance. This behaviour is especially irritating when the original entry doesn't start neatly on an hour boundary, making an exact paste impossible in Day view and forcing you to edit the new entry and fill in the finer details manually.

I've now discovered that by switching to Agenda's Week view before pasting in, all the timing details of an entry are preserved exactly. Problem solved!

Alan Clarkson, Andover

Password panics avoided

As a long-time Psion owner, I've learnt not to panic when turning on my palmtop and finding that my usual password doesn't work.

The first thing to try is retyping it, it's very easy to mis-key a vital character.

Next, try a soft reset, EPOC occasionally seems to get 'confused' about things like serial links and passwords. When locked out of my Series 7 recently, a soft reset enabled me to use the usual password successfully. You'll only lose information in open Word, Sheet or third party application documents that have been entered since the last 'Save'.

Finally, remember that all is not lost even if the above doesn't help—though you'll usually lose *something*. Provided you do good and regular backups (perhaps every day or once a week), simply hard reset the Psion and use PsiWin's 'Restore' feature to put back your documents and applications. You'll lose changes to documents since the last backup, but your Psion will have had its password wiped and you'll be able to set it up again from scratch—this time with an operating system that's not so 'confused'.

Martha Moss, Surbiton

Not-so-hard reset

On a similar theme to the tip above, in the Palmtop offices we occasionally hear of readers having trouble hard-resetting their Psion Series 5 or 5mx. A common scenario is that the serial link stops working or gives strange messages (e.g. 'Not supported'). Try a soft reset first of course, in case that fixes the problem, but sometimes a more drastic reset is needed.

The scenario some people are encountering is that occasionally a hard reset doesn't fix the problem either. This is because a hard reset is ultimately just a wipe of the internal memory and a reboot from the palmtop's ROM, as if you'd just put batteries in a brand new machine. In the event that it's the hardware itself that's become confused (for example, logic conflicts in the serial port circuitry), you should note how to do an 'ultra-hard reset': take out the backup and main batteries and leave the Psion alone for *half an hour*, to make sure all charge has leaked out of the internal circuits. Then re-insert the batteries and turn on—hopefully the errant behaviour will have disappeared.

Another useful tip when having problems rebooting is first to remove any CF card (or PC card in a Series 7/netBook)—system library files and patches stored on CF disk may be conflicting with equivalents in ROM or on the internal disk. As with any modern operating system, troubleshooting can be a time consuming process.

Steve Litchfield, editorial staff

Q&A

Get your Psion and EPOC-related questions answered by our editorial panel...

More Agenda font trouble

Q When I print out part of my Agenda, the print size is tiny. Psion Technical Support say that the print size cannot be changed. Surely this isn't right, as other built-in programs manage to print in a variety of fonts?

Walt Bandurski Jr, Londonderry NH, USA

A **Psion are partly wrong, in fact. Although there's no way to change the default font size for Agenda entries (see issue 30, page 103, for discussion of this), entries which need special formatting or highlighting can be altered on an individual basis to use different font size, emphases, etc. When entering or editing an entry, tap on 'Alarm/More...' and use the 'Text' tab to highlight and alter your text. These alterations are carried forward correctly to any printout.**

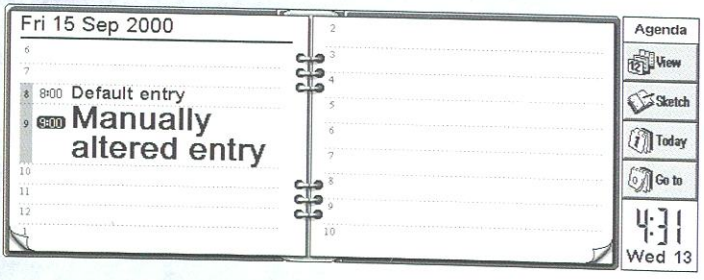
If, as we suspect, your question was driven by a general desire to see all entries printed in a larger typeface, then Psion are correct. Assuming that changing each entry manually is out of the question, you'll have to live with the small-fonted printout.

Another (slightly convoluted) option is to print your Agenda to a file. To do this select 'File' from the 'Via' option in the 'Print setup' dialog within your application and be sure to set the printer type to 'General', otherwise your document will be filled with print formatting commands.

All font emphases will be lost from the resulting plain text file, but you can then use 'Import text file...' to bring it into Word and change the type size and otherwise embellish the formatting.

Missing footnotes

Q I have a problem in converting files from my PC to my Psion. All the footnotes I have written in



Absolute font changes in Agenda are reflected in any printout

Word 97 are missing and did not survive the transfer. Is there any solution to this annoying problem?

Zulkifli, via the Internet

A **Footnotes (not to be confused with footers, which *are* supported) have never been supported on any Psion model. Although in many ways Psion Word is as capable as its desktop cousins, its designers chose to omit footnote support because of the possible confusion associated with displaying them on the smaller (and largely non-WYSIWYG) palmtop screen.**

Jolted into inaction

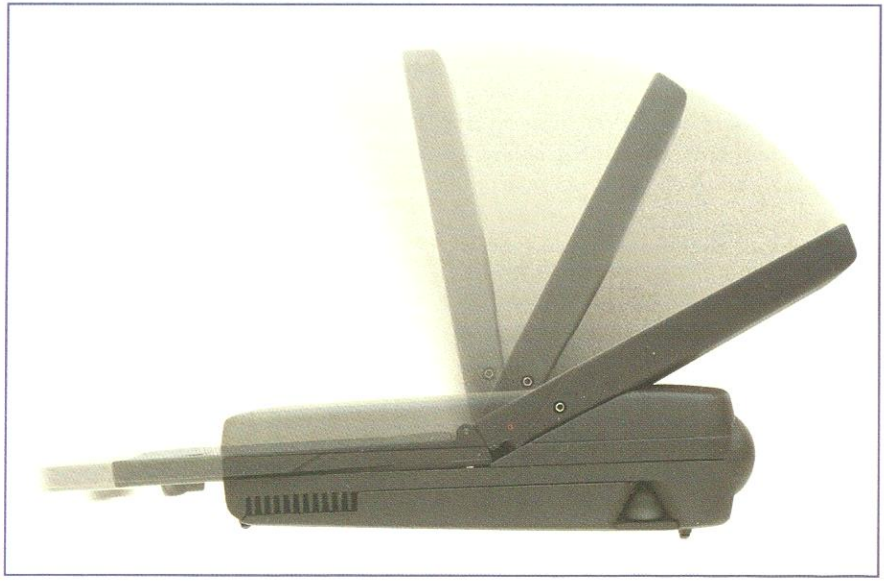
Q My Series 5mx has taken to turning itself off when jolted or when I hit any key especially firmly. Turning it back on with the [Esc] key works, but then the cycle starts again. Help!

Peter Lucic, Manchester

A **The fault almost certainly lies in the sensor that sits underneath the front of the keyboard, to detect when the palmtop is open or closed. You can see it if you turn your 5mx upside down while the keyboard is opened up, along with the protrusion on the bottom lip of the keyboard that pushes the sensor when closed.**

Being on the bottom of the palmtop, the sensor is infamous for collecting fluff and dust and, ultimately, not working consistently. It sounds as though it has jammed very close to the normal 'turn off' position and consequently any jolt is enough to trigger its action.

Unless you send the unit in for repair you'll have to live without the conven-



ience of this automatic on/off system, turning the 5mx on and off manually. On the System screen, tap on 'Control panel' and then on 'Switch on/off'. Uncheck the two dialog options for 'Switch on when case is opened' and 'Switch off when case is closed'. Tap on 'OK' and you won't be bothered by strange behaviour again.

Infrared resets

Q I have been having problems with my Revo. When transferring data from/to my Nokia 8210 phone it sometimes works normally, but on other occasions the Psion does a soft reset. What's going on?

Phil Bennett, Eutaw AL, USA

A **One thing to check is your 'Automatic switch off' time (in 'Control panel | Switch on/off', as in the previous question). There is apparently a known bug in the Revo's software, whereby if this time is set to more than 31 minutes, using the infrared port can cause resets. Altering your 'Automatic switch off' time to a lower value should avert the problem.**

Hungry Psion

Q A few weeks ago, I came across the menu option 'Info | Battery' in the System screen on my Psion 5mx (Dutch version). I then noticed the following 'haunted' behaviour: the average battery current is continuously on the rise. Normally I would expect 60mA, maybe 70. After inserting the last set of new batteries, I read 97mA. A few days later, the average current was 120 mA. A few days later again, I read a shocking 200 mA.

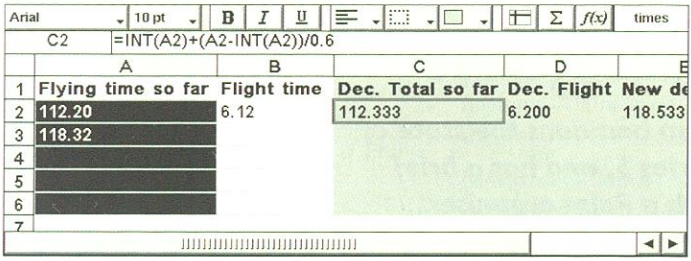
No matter what I do (removing the CF disk, not using the backlight, avoiding much use of the serial and infrared ports, shutting down all programs), the average battery current now continues at well over 200mA. A soft reset didn't cure the problem, but (as I accidentally noticed) a hard reset does seem to solve it. But only temporarily, as the current creeps back up week by week.

Could this be related to the fact that I almost always use the 5mx attached to mains power? Where are all my precious milliamps going?

Roeland Krul, Utrecht, THE NETHERLANDS

A **Funnily enough, one of the editorial Series 5mx's spends most of its time on mains power as well, and inspecting the same menu option revealed identical symptoms. It seems that EPOC's battery monitoring software (which only *estimates* the current being drawn, based on what's happening at any given moment) is confused by this largely-mains-only scenario.**

Inserting a paper clip into the reset hole (a 'soft' reset) is usually sufficient to fix the problem, in our case reducing the estimated battery current to a more sensible 47mA (with the backlight off). The 'average' value still includes calculations made before the soft reset though—taking the batteries out and putting them back in again will reset the battery statistics and allow the calculations to restart. There's no need to go through the trauma of a hard reset and restore.



Handling time addition simply and effectively

Adding times

Q Having checked all the spreadsheet articles I could find in Palmtop magazine over the years, I'm left with a problem that I cannot solve: I need to add two time durations together.

I format a cell to have a time format, for example '5:15', and then want to use this cell in a formula. Using the SUM function seems to return really weird results—if I try and SUM '1:30' and '5:15' then I need the answer of '6:45', not some arbitrary point on a timeline. How can I enter each time so that Sheet will know that I'm using durations, not clock times?

Andrej Novak, Ljubljana, SLOVENIA

A **In fact you can add two durations in Sheet using exactly the technique you describe—when we tested it, SUM produced the right result for the example you used. We suspect that you hadn't formatted the cell containing the formula (and thus the result) properly.**

Having said that, it only works for fairly small values which would make sense as genuine clock times. Trying to work with extended durations (e.g. 115 hours, 34 minutes, as used for instance for flying or sailing times) merely produces errors in the result cell. Fear not though, for there's a simple trick to aid pilots, sailors and others who need to perform the same calculations.

Rather than using time-formatted cells and colons (e.g. '5:15'), use standard 'fixed' formatting, to two decimal places, and decimal points instead (e.g. '5.15'). You can then use a simple formula, '=INT(cell)+(cell-INT(cell))/0.6' to convert this formatted time to decimal hours (e.g. '5.25'). Once the times have been added, summed, subtracted, and so on, a similar formula, '=INT(cell)+(cell-INT(cell))*0.6' will then convert back from decimal to the right 'hours.minutes' format.

To illustrate this, see the screen shot at the top of the page, showing the basis of a simple pilot's logbook. Cell A2 contains the starting flying time in 'hours.minutes' format, and B2 the time to be added on. C2 and D2 are the decimal equivalents of each. E2 is the decimal sum of C2 and D2, and A3 is its equivalent in hours.minutes, ready for the addition in B3 to another flight time entry.

Musings...

Debbie Barham bemoans the state of her ageing Series 5, and has a brief encounter with a Palm organiser...

Confession time—I've been sleeping with the enemy. No, I'm not embroiled in dubious Bond Girlesque undercover activities (though gadget-wise, I could easily out-knobtwiddle Pussy Galore). I've been betraying my fellow Psioneers—and succumbing to the charms of another handheld Operating System.

It all started innocently enough when I decided to upgrade my Series 5. Now, I've never been the type for upgrades (at least, that's what the smiling lady on Virgin Airlines Standard Class always tells me). I buy the new kit for its gimmick value, but for day-to-day use I stick with what I know and trust. My desktop PC, for instance, could be straight out of a hi-tech Spielberg film: I think the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park used one of similar vintage. And some of my software dates back to the era when "64K was enough for anyone" (except, obviously, Bill Gates' salary).

But the old Series 5 was definitely due for retirement. Like the Queen Mother, it'd been patched up with bits of metalwork but still didn't run like it used to. All the letters had rubbed off the keys, and the whole thing was looking decidedly battle-torn. I was going to give it a decent burial and invest in a shiny new 5mx, until my well-meaning friend uttered the fateful phrase:

"Why don't you get yourself a Palm organiser instead?"

Obviously, being such a gadget freak, I already *have* a Palm. Several, in fact. I've had them on-and-off, generally "OFF", or drained of battery power, for years—ever since reviewing the very first Pilot for a late-lamented technology mag' in the mid-90s (that wasn't the year, it was the magazine's circulation). Most had subsequently been sold to dodgy second-hand computer dealers, thereby enabling me to buy more pointless gadgets that I didn't need. Like a gizmo for converting my car cassette-deck into a CD player. Now all I need is a car cassette-deck. And a car.

But like a fool, I was swayed by all the waving Palms brandished by Dixons salesmen. The sleek, brushed aluminium! The dinky add-on camera! The see-thru case! Yes, I'm shallow: bear in mind that I once spent £30 on a plastic toilet brush because it was designed by Philip Starck and called 'The Excalibur'.

But I was convinced that the latest Palm could do everything my Series 5 could, and without spoiling the line of my hip-huggers. It could even, and this was the clincher, double as an extra TV remote control, allowing wordless, non-violent fights

with my Significant Other over whether we watched Teletubbies or Open University.

And? It did, for about a week—until I concluded that my new acquisition was about as technically useful as that Philip Starck toilet brush.

For a start, I'm an expert at losing things. Particularly when intoxicated (bags, credit cards, inhibitions, my lunch in a gutter, etc.) As my grandmother used to say, I'd forget my own head if it wasn't screwed on properly. Not half as drastic as losing my palmtop—there's obviously no important information stored in my head. But there *was* in my new Palm, following laborious conversion of my entire Psion database into this alien format. And the Palm was, indeed, slim enough to slip unobtrusively into a trouser-pocket, and thus leave at home in my other trousers. Or on the bus.

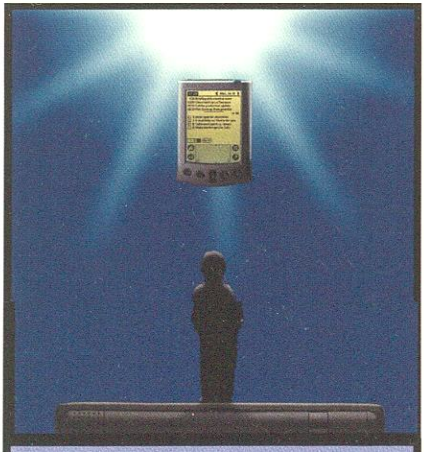
Amazingly, however, I didn't manage to lose the Palm. I'm not *that* dim (unlike the Palm's screen: I couldn't turn the backlight on because it drained the battery, and in contrast to the Psion, couldn't combat this by lugging around sufficient spares to earn me the title of Energiser Bunny-Girl). No: I just lost the *keyboard*. If this month's column had failed to appear, it wouldn't have been because I was on holiday—rather, because I was at the Lost Property Office trying to describe one of those ridiculous folding Palm keyboards to some benighted Jobsworth who eventually categorised it under 'Musical Instruments'.

Now keyboardless, I battled gamely with the Palm's Graffiti handwriting-recognition (in vain—even I can seldom recognise my own handwriting, and the only time I've ever used my Psion's stylus is as auxiliary backup after dropping a chopstick mid-Chow-Mein). I eventually resorted to carrying *both* machines: the Palm for emailing and posing, and the Psion for word processing. I strove to get the Palm pilfered, hoping to claim it on insurance and fund that new 5mx.

Perhaps some former Iraqi shoplifter, forcibly deprived of fingers, might appreciate its lack of typing capabilities? But no, the wretched machine remained resolutely in my possession. "Oooh, you DID get a Palm! Aren't they cool?" enthused my friend, shortly after seeing it and shortly before I poked his eyes out with the otherwise-redundant stylus.

I'm not *anti*-Palms, in the same way that I'm not anti-monarchist. I just don't believe that they (Palms *or* the Royal Family) do the job I want them to.

So I'm sticking with my old Series 5 and selling the Palm to my friend: someone's just stolen his.



Debbie Barham (deb@joke-shop.com) writes regularly for the BBC, the Sun and the London Evening Standard. She is currently working on a cure for gadget-addiction and a new Carlton TV sitcom, which she is writing without the aid of a folding keyboard.

Glossary

Application bar - The touch-sensitive strip along the edge of most EPOC screens, from which selected built-in applications can be launched.

Browser - Application for navigating the World Wide Web, running on any computer platform.

C++ - An efficient high level programming language now used for the majority of commercial EPOC applications. Much harder to learn than OPL, but more powerful and usually gives more compact, faster code.

CF - See **CompactFlash**.

Commercial software - Software produced by full-time programming companies, most often supplied in pre-packaged form.

CompactFlash - Small solid-state memory expansion modules, as used in all current EPOC devices except the Revo. See the 'Inside CompactFlash' feature in issue 17 of *Palmtop*.

Control panel - Invoked by pressing [Crtl]+[S] from the System screen on EPOC devices, showing a list of system control functions such as screen and keyboard settings, printer and dialling preferences, etc.

Crystal - A new category of EPOC communicators featuring half-VGA landscape format screen and full keyboard, due for release sometime in 2001.

Download - To transfer a file from an Internet web site or FTP site onto your palmtop or desktop computer.

EIKON - The 'front end' interface used on all current EPOC devices, that governs the position and appearance of menus, icons, dialog boxes, etc.

Embedding - The act of placing a Spreadsheet, Sketch, Sound object, etc. *within* another EPOC document.

Emulator - A program that mimics the operation of one computer operating system on another. PC-based emulators are available for both SIBO and EPOC devices.

EPOC - Term used to describe the operating system used on the Series 5 range of palmtops and all other current models. Not actually an acronym, EPOC was coined from 'Epoch', being touted as a new 'era' in handheld operating systems.

EPOC Connect - Known to Psion owners as PsiWin, this is the name given to Symbian's connectivity software when bundled with devices such as those made by Ericsson and Oregon Scientific. Functionally almost identical to equivalent PsiWin versions.

ER1/ER2/ER3 - EPOC Release 1/2/3. The first major versions of the EPOC operating system, as employed on the original Series 5 'Classic' and Geofox One.

ER4 - EPOC Release 4. An update of the EPOC operating system employed only (to date) on the Oregon Scientific Osaris.

ER5 - EPOC Release 5. Currently the latest version of EPOC, as used on the Series 5mx, Series 7, netBook, Revo and Ericsson MC218.

Flash - Another term for 'flash memory' devices, such as **CompactFlash** and flash **SSD**.

Freeware - Software that is supplied or made downloadable free of charge. The author/programmer makes no charge for its use, but usually offers no warranties on its stability or performance.

FTP - File Transfer Protocol. FTP sites are sometimes used instead of World Wide Web (WWW) sites as a repository for files and data and web content. Special 'FTP client' software is required to upload files to FTP sites.

Geofox One - The first non-Psion EPOC device, introduced in late 1997. Geofox ceased trading one year later after selling only around 1000 units. See issue 15 of *Palmtop* for a full review.

GPS - Global Positioning System. A GPS receiver is a small handheld device that can

pinpoint your physical location anywhere in the world with an accuracy of a few metres, by triangulating its position from military satellites in orbit. Some GPS receivers can be connected to EPOC devices with suitable software and cables. See issue 19 for most recent coverage in *Palmtop*.

GSM - Global System for Mobile telecommunications. A widely adopted worldwide communications standard for mobile telephones. Largely absent within the USA.

GUI - Graphical User Interface, such as the EIKON system used on EPOC devices, utilising windows, icons, menus, etc. Was preceded by the Command Line Interface (CLI), as used on DOS-based PCs of the 1970-80s.

Honda connector - The small flat connector used to plug an RS232 (Serial) cable into current EPOC devices.

HTML - HyperText Markup Language. The simple scripting system used to create World Wide Web (WWW) pages.

Icon bar - See **application bar**.

Infrared - Wireless communication technique used to transfer data between suitably equipped palmtops and printers/modems, etc. All EPOC devices are equipped with infrared capability.

IrDA - Infrared Data Association. A group set up to form standards for infrared data exchange, and the term used to describe the resulting standard currently employed. All EPOC devices conform to the IrDA standard, but earlier infrared-equipped Psion Series 3 devices do not, and are thus normally unable to communicate with other IrDA devices.

ISP - Internet Service Provider. Companies set up to provide Internet access via a dial-up system.

Java - A high level programming language designed to create programs that will run, without modification, on several computing platforms, such as PC, Macintosh, Unix and EPOC. See *Palmtop* issues 25-27 for a detailed feature on Java.

Javascript - An interpreted programming language, often used to add extra functions to web pages, such as interactive buttons and pop-up menus.

MacConnect - Psion's nearest EPOC equivalent to PsiWin for the Apple Macintosh, but offering only backup, restore and software installation, with no file conversions or synchronization.

Macro - A series of keystrokes, 'recorded' and 'played back' by a suitable utility program to automate commonly-performed tasks.

MBM - Multi BitMap. EPOC's standard picture format.

MC218 - Ericsson's 'clone' of the Series 5mx. Fully compatible with the Series 5mx and capable of running all software designed for the Series 5 range. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 24 and 26.

Message Suite - Psion's combined Email and Web applications for the Series 5 'Classic'.

Modem - Modulator/demodulator. Device used to convert computer data to/from audible pulses that can be transmitted down a conventional telephone line. Required for Internet access from a palmtop.

netBook - Psion's 'vertical market' variant of the Series 7, with more memory and a faster processor. Featured in *Palmtop* issue 27.

Null modem adaptor - small box/connector used to connect two computers or devices such as a modem via an RS232 (Serial) cable by transposing the send/receive wires.

Object - Spreadsheets, Sketches, Sound files, etc. that are *embedded* within another EPOC document. See **embedding**.

OPL - Organiser Programming Language. The BASIC-like high level programming language built into most Psion devices.

OPX - An extension to OPL, providing extra functionality under EPOC.

Osaris - EPOC device produced by Oregon Scientific in 1999. The Osaris will not run many EPOC programs due to its small (320x200 pixel) screen. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 24 and 26.

Palmtop CD - PC and Macintosh compatible CD-ROM supplied free with *Palmtop* magazine subscriptions and containing virtually all non-commercial Psion-related software ever produced.

Parallel link - Cable for connecting EPOC computers to standard Parallel (Centronics) sockets as found on most PC-compatible printers.

PC-Card adaptor - Psion adaptor to allow connection to PC-Card modems, etc. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 11.

PCMCIA Card - Now known simply as 'PC-Card'.

Pearl - New category of EPOC smart-phones, due for release in 2001.

Pixel - Term derived from 'picture element'. Refers to a single 'dot' on a computer screen.

POP3 - A common Internet mail protocol for downloading messages.

PsiMac - Psion's nearest Series 3 (SIBO) equivalent to PsiWin for the Apple Macintosh, but offering only backup, restore and software installation, plus Word and Sheet conversion.

Psion Organiser - Term coined with the appearance of Psion's first handheld 'organiser' device in 1984.

PsiWin - PC-based software that allows backup/restore, software installation, conversion of files and synchronization of certain data between Psion/EPOC devices and PCs.

Quartz - New category of EPOC devices featuring keyboardless operation, due for release next year.

RAM - Random Access Memory.

Revo - The Revo was introduced in late 1999 as a cut-down and compact Series 5-like machine, with a non-backlit screen and no memory expansion capability.

Revo Plus - Introduced in September 2000, with double the memory (16MB) of the original Revo, plus Psion WAP and Opera web browsers included on CD.

ROM - Read Only Memory.

RS232 - Long-standing serial communications standard used for cable connections between all Psion/EPOC devices and desktop computers.

RTF - Rich Text Format. A common word processor file format supported by many word processing programs, and built into Psion Series 3 devices as a standard saveable/readable format.

SDK - Software Development Kit. A set of tools used for programming.

Serial cable - See **RS232**.

Series 3 - The first range of Psion palmtops to feature a QWERTY keyboard. First introduced in 1991, later models were the 3a, 3c and 3mx, with the 3mx finally discontinued in late 1999.

Series 5 - The first Psion palmtops to feature the EPOC operating system, introduced in mid-1997. The original Series 5 was later dubbed the Series 5 'Classic'.

Series 5mx - Introduced in mid-1999 as a replacement to the original Series 5, with double the memory (16MB) and several software enhancements.

Series 7 - Introduced in late 1999 as a handheld/laptop hybrid, featuring colour screen and both CF and PC-Card expansion slots. Reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 25 and 27.

Shareware - Software that can be freely copied or downloaded for a fixed evaluation period, after which the software should be paid for. Shareware 'registration' fees generally range from £5-£25.

SIBO - Now refers to the operating system used by the Series 3 range of Psion palmtops. An acronym of 'SIngle Board Organiser'.

Siena - Introduced in 1996 as a cut down Series 3 device with a half-width screen and no memory expansion capabilities.

Silk-screen - The touch-sensitive area around the screen edge of EPOC devices, includes the menu, infrared, clipboard and zoom command icons.

SIS - Software Installation System. A means of installing software to an EPOC device via a single, self-extracting file.

SMS - Short Messaging Service. Used to send text messages up to 160 characters in length via the GSM telephone network.

SMTP - Simple Mail Transfer Protocol. A common Internet mail protocol for sending messages.

SSD - Solid State Disk. Proprietary storage 'card' devices used to expand the capacity of the Series 3 range of palmtops.

SSL - Secure Sockets Layer. A system of encryption for web pages, often used for web-based money transactions.

Symbian - A joint venture between Psion, Nokia, Ericsson, Motorola and other major telecommunications/computing companies to develop the EPOC standard and its derivatives.

System folder - A hidden folder present on all EPOC devices and containing numerous system settings/configuration files and all installed add-on software. See 'Inside the System folder' in *Palmtop* issue 28 for more details.

System screen - The equivalent of a PC 'desktop' on Psion/EPOC devices. Accessed from EPOC by tapping the 'System' silk-screen icon.

Toolbar - The strip of software buttons present down one side of the screen within most EPOC applications.

Upload - To transfer a file to an Internet web site or FTP site from your palmtop or desktop computer.

URL - Uniform Resource Locator. Essentially the unique address of an Internet web or FTP site.

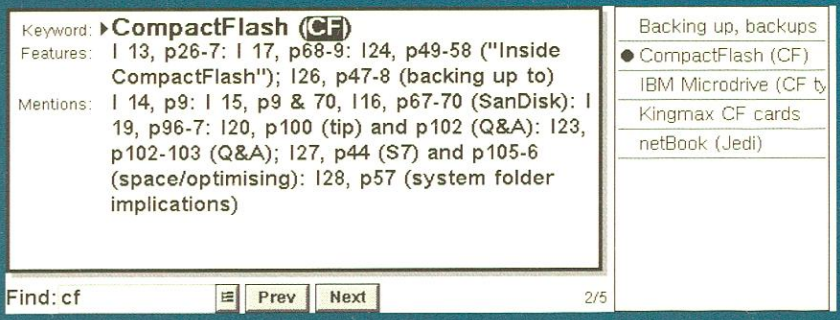
WAP - Wireless Application Protocol. A system for delivery of limited Internet content to handheld devices.

Web - Abbreviated form of 'World Wide Web', the graphical system of hypertext pages published on the Internet.

Zip - A compressed file format used widely on PCs and commonly adopted on Psion/EPOC devices.

DON'T FORGET THE PALMTOP INDEX!

For a more comprehensive list of article cross-references, see the Palmtop index, supplied on all Palmtop CDs, or freely downloadable from *www.palmtop.co.uk* .


Keyword: CompactFlash (CF)
Features: I 13, p26-7: I 17, p68-9: I24, p49-58 ("Inside CompactFlash"); I26, p47-8 (backing up to)
Mentions: I 14, p9: I 15, p9 & 70, I16, p67-70 (SanDisk): I 19, p96-7: I20, p100 (tip) and p102 (Q&A): I23, p102-103 (Q&A); I27, p44 (S7) and p105-6 (space/optimising): I28, p57 (system folder implications)
Backing up, backups
CompactFlash (CF)
IBM Microdrive (CF ty
Kingmax CF cards
netBook (Jedi)
Find: cf
Prev
Next
2/5

Usenet Groups, etc.

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.comm
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.reviews

These newsgroups are the unmoderated discussion groups on the Internet. It's easiest to access them via a desktop machine using Microsoft or Netscape web browsers (choose 'Read newsgroups' or similar on their menu), but there's now also a dedicated EPOC newsreader, RMRNews, which you can download from *www.rmrsoft.com* .

There are also digests, with daily messages sent by email. Subscribe at *www.pinkworks.com/pda/s5list.html* .

Linux users can find a Linux Psion mailing list at *linux-psion@geekstuff.co.uk* and more Psion-related information at *ftp://ftp.to.com/pub/psion* .

Proprietary discussion forums

AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion
CiX Psion conference	join psion join cixed

Psion-related software

3-Lib	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
CiX	'join psion', then look in '/files' and '/s5_files' file lists
EPOC Software	*www.epocsoftware.com*
Plus, of course, the Palmtop CD	See page 140.

Psion FAQ

The Series 3 and Series 5 Frequently Asked Questions documents contain useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm

Information

3 For All	*freespace.virgin.net/ro.cutler*
3-Lib	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
Armlink	*www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk*
Palmtop magazine	*www.palmtop.co.uk*
PocketInfo	*www.pocketinfo.org*
Psion	*www.psion.com*
Symbian	*www.symbian.com*

News

EPOC City	*www.epoccity.com*
EPOC News	*www.epocnews.com*
EPOC Zone	*www.epoczone.com*
PDA News	*news.tucows.com/pdanews*
Widget News	*www.widget.com*

Software houses

Atelier	*www.atelier.tm*
Beelogic	*www.beelogic.com*
Ben Vaughan Software	*www.bjv.btinternet.co.uk*
FreEPOC	*www.freepoc.de*
Neuon	*www.neuon.com*
Palmtime	*www.shoresystems.net/palmtime*
PalmTop Software	*www.palmtopsoftware.com*
PocketIQ	*www.pocketiq.com*
Purple Software	*www.purplesoft.com*
RMR Software	*www.rmrsoft.com*
Widget Software	*www.widget.co.uk*

Miscellaneous

Directory of software authors	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk/authors.htm*
FoxPop	*www.foxpop.ndirect.co.uk*
Go32	*www.go32.com*
Online with your Psion	*homepages.ihug.co.nz/~jochens*
Revoworld	*www.revoworld.com*

Search engines

Googol	*www.googol.net*
Psion Websearches	*psion.websearches.net*

Problems with your Psion?

Here are some useful guidelines if you think you may have a problem with your Psion palmtop:

Things to check

Before even thinking of picking up the phone, make sure you've checked the following, if only to save your own embarrassment if it turns out to be something easy to solve:

- Are the batteries OK? The Psion's own battery information option (from the System screen menu) will give you an indication of their health, otherwise you might want to invest in a cheap battery tester. If in doubt, replace them with brand new alkaline batteries. Note that rechargeable batteries have a much shorter life and do not always give accurate readings with the Psion's built-in battery checker.
- If the screen appears to be faulty, it could be that the contrast just needs adjusting. If set to minimum you will have a blank screen, whereas a maximum setting will give you an all-black screen. To adjust the contrast on a Series 3, hold down [Psion]+[.], on EPOC machines, it's [Fn]+[.]. If the touch screen is misbehaving, go into System's 'Control panel | Screen' and recalibrate.
- A common problem with the Series 5/5mx is a stuck stylus. To reset the mechanism, gently pull on the lip on the underside of the case, just below the RS-232 connector (or see *Palmtop* issue 15, page 86).
- Have you tried resetting the Psion? If it's still possible to back up the unit, do so again unless you already have a very recent backup. Then try a 'soft' reset. If that doesn't sort things out, try a 'hard' reset (see the manual for details on how to do this). If neither of these work, it's worth unhooking all cables, removing all the batteries (AAs *and* the backup cell) plus any SSD or CompactFlash, and leaving the unit for 30 minutes. Put the batteries back in and try again, restoring your data if the Psion comes back to life.

Checks complete, but the fault is still there?

If all the above advice fails to help, it's best to contact the experts. If outside the UK, you'll have to contact your local distributors for support options. You can find a list of worldwide service agents at *www.psion.com/international*. If within the UK, read on...

Machine repairs

If your machine has developed a hardware fault, you may find that your supplier (particularly if a High Street store) has an arrangement for replacing your faulty machine. However, most people get their units repaired either by Psion themselves or by POS Ltd. If your Psion is still covered by the 12-month warranty, you should definitely contact Psion. If it is older than a year then you have a choice, although prices are generally similar between the two.

Repairs by Psion

The Psion Repair Centre can be contacted by telephone on 0208 575 9919, or by email at *uk-repair@psion.com* .

If in the UK, send the broken palmtop by Registered post or by courier, to:

Psion UK Repair Centre
Unit 6 Derby Road
Metropolitan Centre
Greenford
Middlesex UB6 8U

If using a Psion Enterprise product, such as a netBook, see *www.enterprise.psion.com/public/instruct.htm* for their current return procedure.

Psion *do not* guarantee to save data that may already be on your machine, so it is important to back up your data first if at all possible. You should remove the batteries (if your data is safe), stylus and SSDs/CFs. Package the machine securely, and enclose a covering letter describing the fault, remembering to supply a daytime phone number and return address.

Remember to keep a note of your machine's serial number, most commonly found beneath the SSD/CF disk door, as you may need to quote this if contacting Psion.

Attach some proof of purchase if you expect the repair to be under warranty. Psion will acknowledge receipt of the palmtop into their system, billing you if the repair is chargeable, and will usually return the fixed unit within about a week, by courier.

Repairs by POS Ltd

POS Ltd. offer a similar postal service, plus 'while you wait' repairs at their high street shop at 143 Streatham High Road, London SW16 6EG. Providing you've booked an appointment, repairs can generally be done on the spot in 1-2 hours.

Telephone POS Ltd. on 0208 677 9246 or see *www.posltd.com* for further details.

Technical support

If you have a software or operational problem, you may wish to contact Psion's Technical Support department. You can do this by email via their web site or, in the UK, call the premium rate support service on 0906 554 0000. See *www.psion.com/support/support_info.asp* for prices and other support options. Before calling, consult your manual, or the Support Knowledgebase at *www.psion.com/support* for answers to common questions.

Alternative support

As an alternative to Psion's own support, you may like to try either POS Ltd (details given above) or pSIONMAN, as advertised on page 136 of this issue.

Psion/EPOC models at a glance

Maker	Model	Year launched	Original price (inc VAT)	Memory	Operating system
Psion	Organiser I	1984	£99	2K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II CM	1986	£99	8K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II XP	1986	£139	16K/32K	Psion
Psion	Organiser II LZ	1988	£149/189	32K/64K	Psion
Psion	MC200	1989	£495	128K	SIBO
Psion	MC400/Word	1989	£695	256K	SIBO
Psion	MC600	1989	£1295	768K	DOS 3.2
Psion	Series 3	1991	£199/£249	128K/256K	SIBO
Psion	Series 3a	1993	£279/£329	256K/512K	SIBO
Psion	Series 3a	1995	£339/£399	1MB/2MB	SIBO
Psion	Workabout	1995	Various	Various	SIBO and custom
Psion	Series 3c	1996	£339/£399	1MB/2MB	SIBO
Psion	Siena	1996	£169/£229	512K/1MB	SIBO
Psion	Series 5	1997	£439/£499	4MB/8MB	EPOC
Geofox	Geofox One	1997	£385/£599	4MB/16MB	EPOC
Psion	Series 3mx	1998	£269	2MB	SIBO
Psion	Workabout mx	1998	Various	Various	SIBO and custom
Psion	Series 5mx	1999	£429	16MB	EPOC
Ericsson	MC218	1999	£479	16MB	EPOC
Oregon Scientific	Osaris	1999	£219/£279	4MB/8MB	EPOC
Psion	Series 7	1999	£699	16MB, upgradeable to 32MB	EPOC
Psion Enterprise	netBook	1999	£995	32MB, upgradeable to 64MB	EPOC
Psion	Revo	1999	£299	8MB	EPOC
Psion	Revo Plus	2000	£299	16MB	EPOC

Processor type/speed	Screen	Expansion options	Infrared
	16-character single line	2 'datapak' slots	No
HD6303X/0.92Mhz	16-character, 2 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
HD6303X/0.92Mhz	16-character, 2 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
HD6303X/0.92Mhz	20-character, 4 line	2 'datapak' slots	No
80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 200	4 SSD slots, one with upgradable OS	No
80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 400	4 SSD slots, one with upgradable OS	No
80C86/7.68Mhz	640 x 200	1MB 'internal' disk, OS in flash RAM	No
NEC V30/3.84Mhz	240 x 80	2 SSD slots	No
NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160	2 SSD slots	No
NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160	2 SSD slots	No
NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	240 x 100 backlit	2 internal SSD slots	No
NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	480 x 160 (later backlit)	2 SSD slots	Yes
NEC V30H/7.68Mhz	240 x 160	External (optional) SSD drive	Yes
ARM 710/18.43Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
ARM 710/18.43Mhz	640 x 320, backlit	PC-Card slot	Yes
NEC V30MX/27.68Mhz	480 x 160, backlit	2 SSD slots	Yes
NEC V30MX/27.68Mhz	240 x 100 backlit	2 internal SSD slots	Yes
ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	640 x 240, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
CL-PS7111/18.43Mhz	320 x 200, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash slot	Yes
StrongArm SA-1100 /130Mhz	640 x 480 colour, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash and PC-Card slots	Yes
StrongArm SA-1100 /190Mhz	640 x 480 colour, backlit, touch sensitive	CompactFlash and PC-Card slots	Yes
ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	480 x 160, touch sensitive	None	Yes
ARM 710T/36.86Mhz	480 x 160, touch sensitive	None	Yes

Using the Palmtop CD-ROM

- **Windows** users who receive the CD should double-click on the file 'Start.htm'. On most PCs the web browser will leap into life and display the CD interface. If nothing happens, or if Windows asks how the file should be displayed, cancel the operation and install a 'web browser' application such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape (these can be found on almost all PC magazine cover CDs). After installation, try double-clicking on 'Start.htm' again.

  Please note that your operating system may set all files retrieved from the CD to 'Read-only'. This shouldn't cause a problem for 99% of applications, but you may have to manually change file properties (e.g. use [Control]+[P] on the EPOC machine) if you have problems with running or removing software.

  Those who install a new web browser should note that it often comes with its default start page set to the maker's web site, meaning that it tries to go online. Just go into its 'View|Options' dialog (or similar) and set the start page to a file local to your computer (e.g. the *Palmtop* CD Start.htm file).

- **Macintosh** users should simply drag the 'start.htm' file onto their web browser, where it will load the interface just as on a PC. Please note that PsiWin is designed to run on PCs, so it will not work directly on your Mac. Recent CDs also come with a Mac-specific start page.

- **DOS** and **Amiga** owners may be restricted in what they can view on the CD, but will still be able to browse the library section and copy off the software as needed.

- Users of **RISC OS** machines have had a few problems with the 'Joliet' format used on the Palmtop CD-ROM. Fortunately that has now been resolved, and users of those machines can now access all of the web sites on the CD without getting error messages (although they obviously won't be able to run any of the applications). All that's needed is a copy of Warm Silence Software's CDROMFS. For more details, contact Warm Silence Software Ltd, PO Box 28, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1XX. tel: 0585 487642, fax: 01608 737172 or see their web site at *www.wss.co.uk*.

  RISC OS users will also find that the copy of the ArmLink web site on the CD contains PsiFS, a free application they can use to transfer files between their palmtop and desktop machines.

- **Linux** users should mount the CD on their computer and open their web browser on the 'Start.htm' file. PsiWin is of course designed to run on PCs, so will not work directly under Linux.

FOR SALE, WANTED, ETC...

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NEW Australian User Group

Anyone interested in joining a new EPOC User Group in Sydney, Australia with a view to having regular meetings to discuss applications/uses and further the growth of Psion in Australia, please contact Andre Vlcek by email with their details: *avlcek@orange.net.au*

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Email: richardofyork@hotmail.com

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Contact: 01425 612090
Email: ian-brighton@lineone.net

Psion Series 5 (8Mb), PsiWin 2.1 and PsiWin cable. Battery runs out quickly, therefore needs attention—nominal £15 to cover P&P.
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Series 5 (8MB), Psiwin and cable, plus PalmTop Software Expense Manager - £150 plus postage.
Email: reidhutchison@psion.net

Series 3 SSDs (with original manuals and two leather/suede wallets) that each take four disks each: Autoroute Express, Berlitz Phrase Book, Chess (Purple Software), Data View Pro (Purple Software), Games Deluxe, Graphics Deluxe (Purple Software) - £85 the lot.
Contact: Eric on 01383 734010 (evenings and weekends)
Email: e.s.f@talk21.com

Pegasus III modem with built-in battery and AC adaptor/charger, suitable for Psion Series 3/5/7 - £85.
Contact: John Wynstanly on 01708 505823
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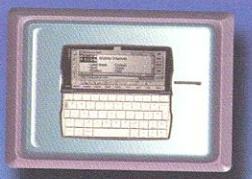

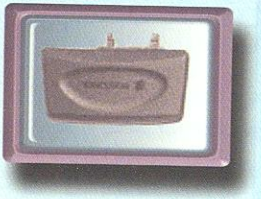

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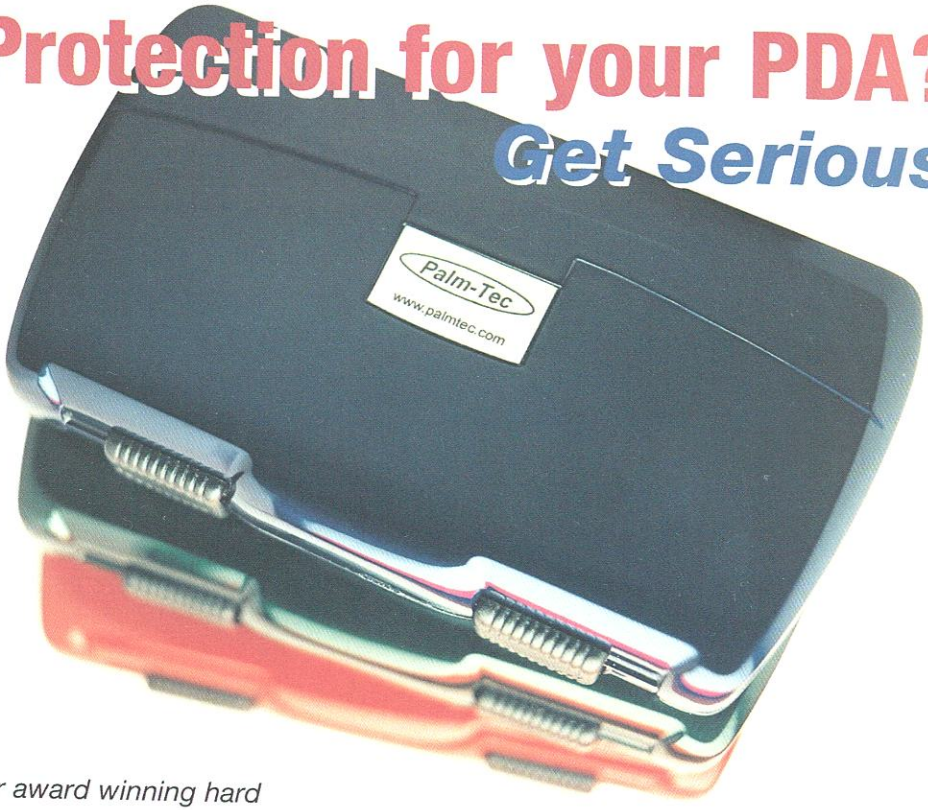

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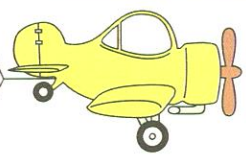

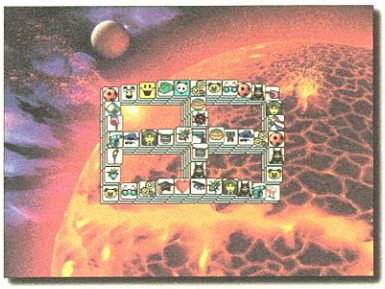

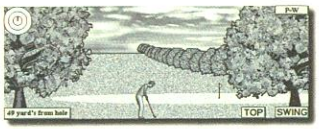

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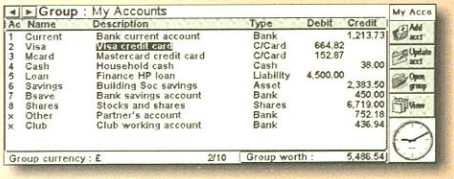
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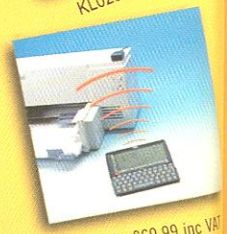

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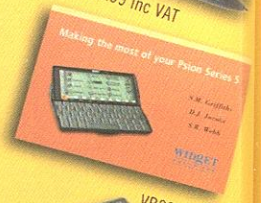

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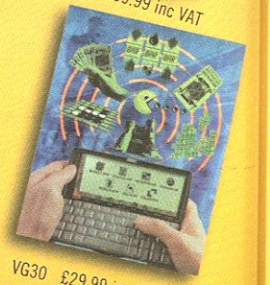

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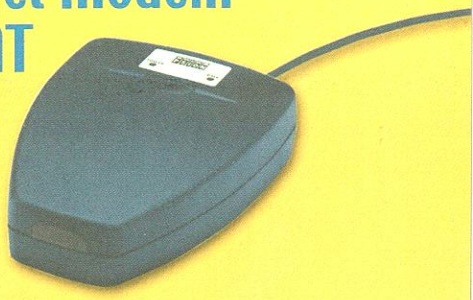

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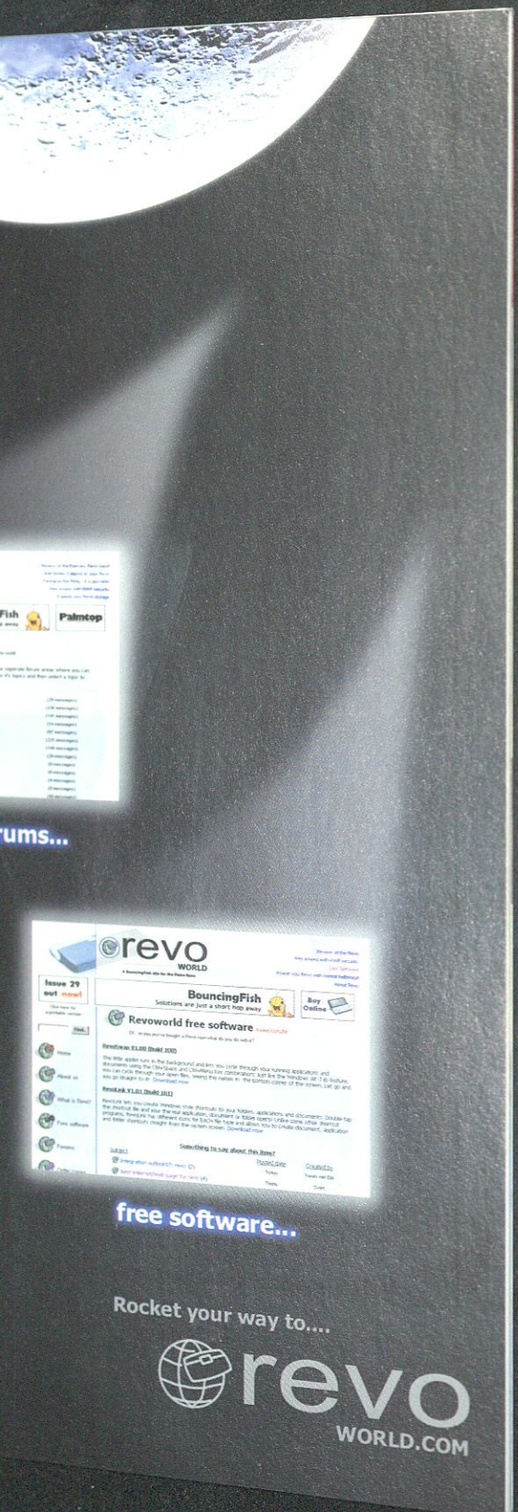
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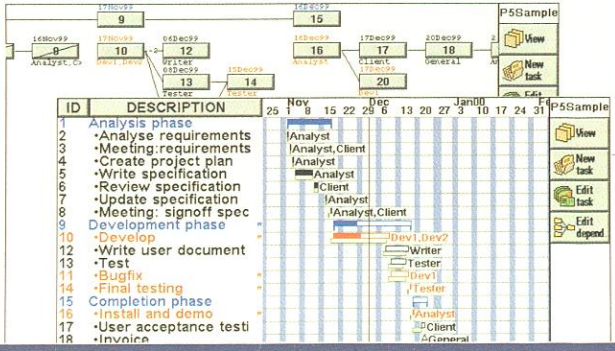

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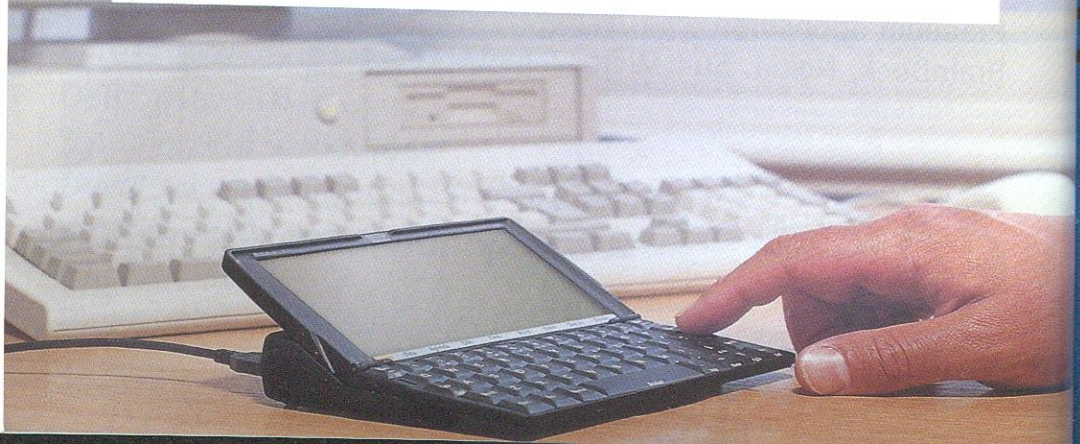

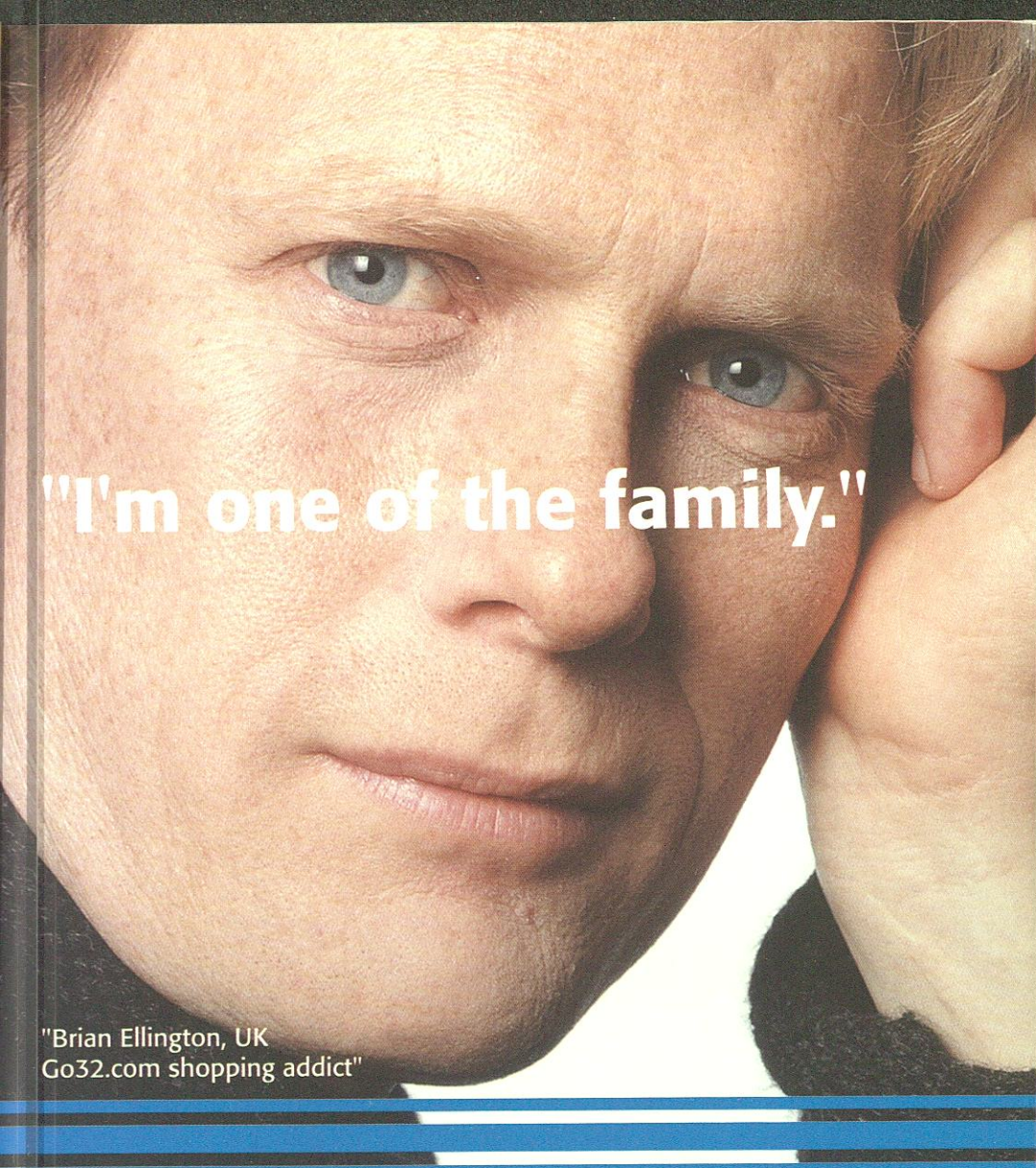

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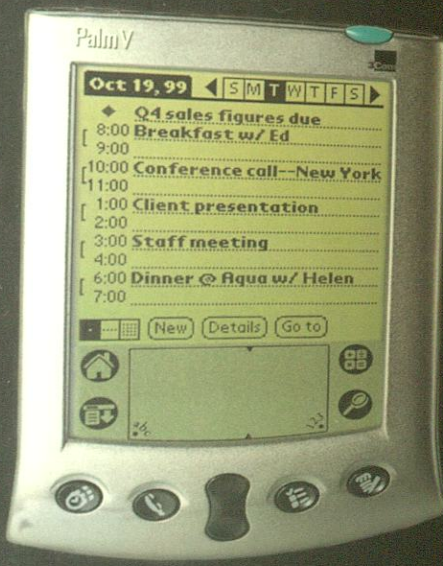

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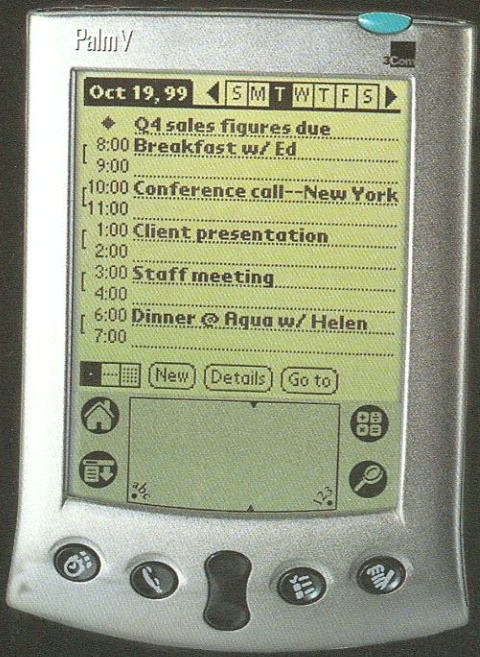

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- A seasonal roundup of useful accessories
- Troubleshooting your palmtop - hardware and software advice
- Configuring your Agenda - some useful pointers
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- Getting along with Street Planner Millennium
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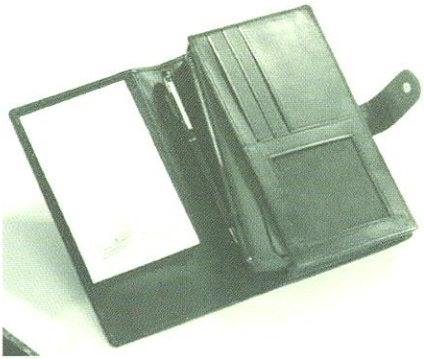

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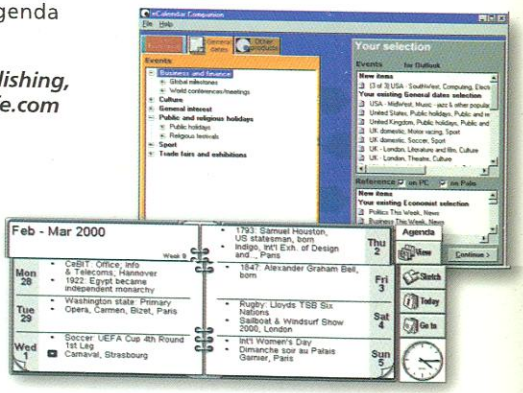

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